



REPORT

Nashville and Its Peers: Policing and Public Safety

A Comparative Analysis of Ten City Police Departments

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May 2026

Prepared for



Executive Summary

As Nashville works to enhance public safety, it is important to understand how its challenges and its responses compare to peer cities. Comparing crime trends across peer cities can highlight areas of progress or concern. Comparing resources spent on policing — and the services that spending produces — can inform policymakers and the public as they make spending decisions.

The Nashville Police + Public Safety Alliance commissioned this research to provide accurate information on these issues for policymakers, community leaders, and the public. It compares crime trends and resources devoted to public safety in Nashville to nine peer cities: Austin, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Columbus, Ohio; Denver, Colorado; Indianapolis, Indiana; Kansas City, Missouri; Louisville, Kentucky; Memphis, Tennessee; and Raleigh, North Carolina.

This white paper focuses on the police. However, it is important to note that the police are not solely responsible for crime rates. Crime arises from multiple, interacting factors. Structural conditions such as concentrated poverty, income inequality, neighborhood disadvantage, and weak labor markets are associated with higher rates of crime. Family disruption, substance use, illicit drug market dynamics, and the prevalence of firearms all contribute to violence. Crime is also influenced by situations in which people seeking to commit crimes encounter easy targets, and where there is little oversight, supervision, or deterrence. As a result, it is not appropriate to treat police departments as if they are solely responsible for crime rates.

At the same time, substantial evidence from quasi-experimental studies shows that police can reduce crime — particularly violent crime — when they are sufficiently staffed and strategically deployed using evidence-based approaches that increase the certainty of apprehension.¹

For that reason, this white paper compares Nashville and its peer cities across four areas: 1) budget and staffing, 2) workloads, 3) access to technology, and 4) officer compensation and wellness. Among the questions it addresses are the following:

- How does Nashville's spending on policing compare to peer cities?
- How do MNPDP staffing levels, workloads, and response times compare to those of peer-city police departments?
- To what extent are peer cities using technologies such as automated license plate readers (LPRs) and real-time video and data-integration platforms?
- How does MNPDP compensation compare to that of peer-city police departments? How do hiring and wellness incentives compare?

¹ Aaron Chalfin, and Justin McCray, "Criminal Deterrence: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 55, No. 1, March 2017, pp. 5–48. <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/jel.20141147>.

Key Findings

Nashville Crime Trends

- **In 2025, homicides fell faster in Nashville than in peer cities.** Preliminary MNPDP data show that homicides fell approximately 34% from 2024 to 2025. Homicide rates in Nashville's peer cities fell approximately 21% during this period.²
- **Nashville's total UCR Part 1 violent crime rate — the FBI's combined measure of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault — fell by approximately 14% from 2024 to 2025.** Preliminary estimates suggest peer cities experienced roughly similar declines in violent crime rates, on the order of 15-16%.
- **Nashville's serious violent crime and property crime rates fell below pre-pandemic levels in 2025.** Preliminary MNPDP data show that Nashville's homicide rate in 2025 was approximately 22% lower than in 2019. Its violent crime rate in 2025 was approximately 6% lower than in 2019, and its property crime rate was approximately 3% lower. However, aggravated assault rates and motor vehicle theft rates still appear to be higher than before the pandemic-era crime spike (up 12% and 46% respectively).
- **Nashville's serious crime rate was higher than most of its peers in 2024, the most recent year for which complete FBI data are available.** Official FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program data for 2024 place Nashville fourth among the peer group cities on total Part 1 UCR crime — behind Memphis, Kansas City, and Denver, and above the remaining six peer cities (Austin, Charlotte, Columbus, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Raleigh). The gap between Nashville and the cities ranked below it is substantial; on total Part 1 crime, Nashville's rate is roughly 27% higher than Charlotte's and approximately 82% higher than Columbus's.
- **Finally, the composition of crime in Nashville has changed over the past five to six years.** MNPDP data show that between 2019 and 2025, aggravated assault rates in Nashville rose by 12% while robbery rates fell by 57%. Data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) for the period from 2019 to 2024 show that **aggravated assaults involving handguns rose by 52% while robberies involving handguns fell by 45%.** MNPDP data show that **burglaries and larceny also fell between 2019 and 2025 (by 28% and 5%, respectively) while motor vehicle theft surged (+46%).**

Resources & Staffing

- **In fiscal year 2025, Nashville spent less on policing as a share of its general operating funds (a rough measure of discretionary, taxpayer-supported spending) than most peer cities — 19%, down from 21% in fiscal year 2020.** Despite spending less on policing (as a share of general operating funds), **Nashville's per capita spending on police (\$438 per resident) in fiscal year 2025 was higher than the peer-city average.**
- **MNPDP logs more calls for service per capita than most peer-city police departments, suggesting a comparatively high workload.** However, the number of MNPDP officers actually dispatched in response to those calls appears lower than at most peer-city departments that report this statistic.
- **MNPDP has fewer officers per square mile than any peer-city police department.** In part as a result, Nashville has higher response times than peer-city police departments that report this statistic.

² This white paper focuses on a set of serious felony crimes that the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program has tracked since before 1960 — so-called "UCR Part 1 crime." UCR Part 1 crimes measure four types of violent crime — murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault — and three types of property crime — burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. See Appendix B for a detailed discussion of the methodology.

- **MNPD base pay is lower than that of many peer-city police departments.** Starting salaries lag, and pay for patrol officers also caps out lower than in many peer cities. However, this measure does not capture total compensation, which includes benefits, health insurance, and retirement plans.
- **MNPD has one of the lowest officer vacancy rates (9%) among peer-city police departments.** This suggests that MNPD is an attractive workplace with competitive total compensation (including benefits, health insurance, and retirement plans). However, MNPD's vacancy rate still represents a significant staffing challenge.

Access to Technology

Nashville is not deploying technologies that are widely used in peer cities.

- **Nashville stands out among peer cities for not using automated license plate readers (LPRs).** All of Nashville's peer cities except for Austin currently use LPRs, integrating the data they provide into their real-time crime centers. Five of Nashville's nine peer cities also use acoustic gunshot detection systems (GDS) while Nashville does not.
- **Nashville stands out among peer cities for not using a real-time video and data-integration platform to support its real-time crime center.** All of Nashville's nine peer-city police departments have this capacity. Nashville also operates and/or has access to a smaller network of public cameras than most peer cities.

Civil liberties advocates and some elected officials in Nashville have expressed a range of concerns about LPR and video surveillance technologies. These include concerns about the potential for racial bias in deployment, skepticism about the efficacy of oversight and policy safeguards, and concerns that federal law enforcement agencies could access local data for purposes such as immigration enforcement or monitoring First Amendment-protected activities.

These individuals and elected officials are not alone in expressing concerns about the potential misuse of these technologies if federal law enforcement agencies were to gain access to them. In 2025, Austin voted to suspend its LPR program. Denver voted not to renew an LPR contract, although the city continues to operate its network of over 100 LPRs while a task force develops policy safeguards. However, most peer cities continue to utilize these and other technologies.

Data and Methodology

This white paper draws on several data sources. Statistics for cross-city crime trends come primarily from Jacob Kaplan's Crime Data Tool, which compiles data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program and from AH DataLytics's Real-Time Crime Index (RTCI). The white paper also uses MNPd data and homicide data from peer cities. Budget, staffing, and compensation analyses rely on published city budget books, a peer-city police department survey designed for this project, and data provided by Metro Human Resources. Technology descriptions draw on survey responses; literature reviews rely on peer-reviewed public sources.

Cross-city comparisons require judgment. Cities begin their fiscal years at different times, define and count calls for service differently, and report staffing at different points in the year. The appendices describe data sources and methodologies in detail.

Section One: Crime Trends

This analysis begins by examining crime trends in Nashville and its peer cities across three distinct time spans: the short-term (2024 to 2025), the medium-term (pre-pandemic to 2024, the most recent year for which FBI statistics are available), and the long-term. Doing so will allow us to explore the following questions:

- How did Nashville's crime decline from 2024 to 2025 compare to changes in crime trends in peer cities?
- Have Nashville and peer cities recovered from the large increase in fatal and non-fatal shootings that occurred in 2020, during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How does crime in Nashville today compare to crime a decade ago?

A Note on Crime Data

This white paper focuses on what are known as UCR Part 1 crimes — murder and non-negligent manslaughter (commonly referred to in this report as "homicide"), aggravated assault, robbery, rape, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program are widely used in analyses of crime, but they come with a significant limitation: UCR data measure only reported crime. **Most crime is never reported to the police.** According to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) only about 45% of violent crime victimizations — and just 30% of property crime victimizations — are reported.³

This report follows conventional practice in discussing crime rates and crime trends. However, readers should know that this analysis (and most discussions of crime) are in fact describing *reported crime*. See Appendix B for a complete discussion of UCR Part 1 crime data and the other data sources used in this analysis.

2025: A Year of Significant Crime Declines

In 2025, Nashville experienced a sharp decline in violent crime compared to 2024. From 2024 to 2025, homicides in Nashville fell by approximately 34% and overall violent crime fell by approximately 14%.

The FBI has not yet published official data on crime trends for 2025. Data from AH Datalytics's Real-Time Crime Index (RTCI) for Nashville and its peer cities is still preliminary. To minimize potential errors, Table 1 compares Nashville's crime decline to other mid-sized cities in the RTCI. It shows that Nashville experienced a larger decline in homicide and violent crime than most cities, a similar decline in property crimes, and a small decline in motor vehicle thefts.

³ Susannah Tapp and Emilie J. Coen, "Criminal Victimization, 2023," Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv23.pdf>.

Table 1: Crime Declines in Nashville & Mid-Sized U.S. Cities

% Change in Crime Rates, 2024 to 2025

Metric	Nashville	Mid-Sized U.S. Cities
Change in murders	-34%	-21%
Change in aggravated assaults	-13%	-9%
Change in violent crimes	-14%	-12%
Change in Property crimes	-12%	-13%
Change in motor vehicles	-19%	-27%

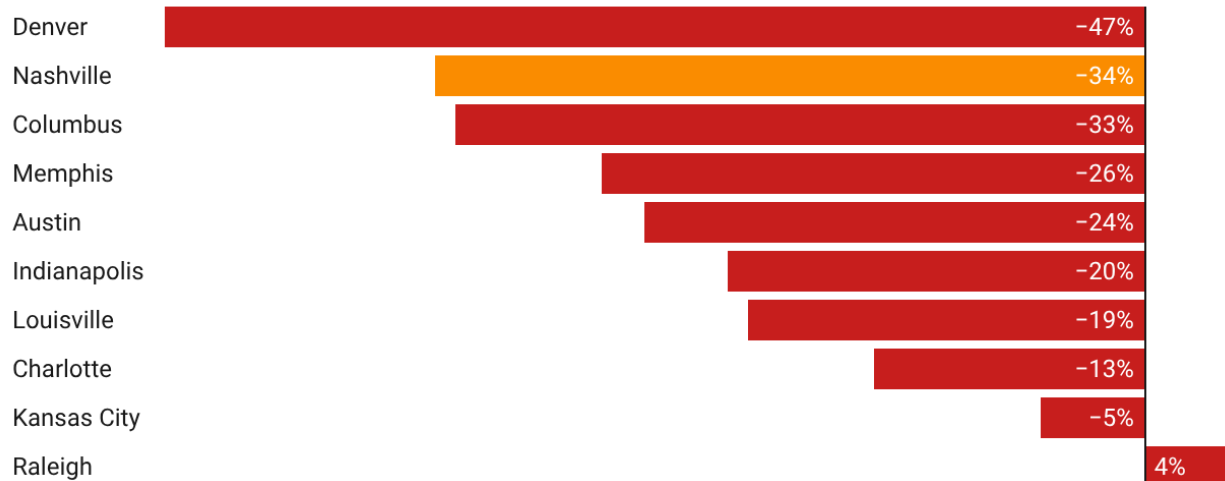
Both MNPd and RTCI data are preliminary and subject to change. These figures should be viewed as estimates

Source: MNPd 3/3/2026 Crime Initiative book, RTCI (Mid-Sized U.S. cities, 3/3/2026) • Created with Datawrapper

Nashville also experienced a larger reduction in homicides in 2025 than most peer cities, as shown in Chart 1. Only Denver (-47%) experienced a larger decrease.

Chart 1: Change in Homicides, 2024 to 2025

% Change in homicide counts

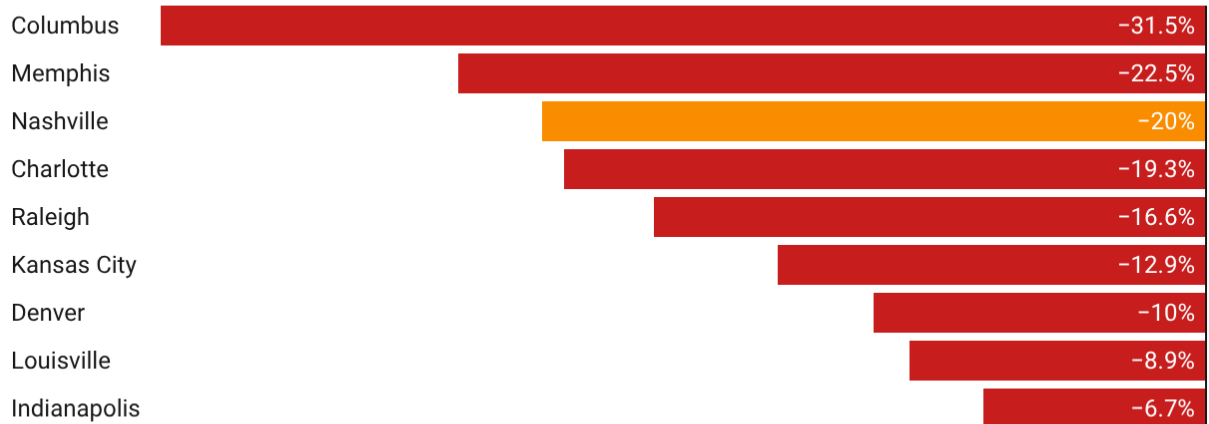


Source: Police department and public source data. These numbers are estimates that are subject to further change. See Appendix B for a further discussion of these sources. • Created with Datawrapper

Homicides, however, account for less than 1% of UCR Part 1 violent crimes. Nashville also saw large declines in overall violent crime in 2025, as shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Changes in UCR Part 1 Violent Crime, 2024 to 2025

% Change in murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault counts



RTCI figures for 2025 are preliminary and subject to change. As a result, these numbers should be viewed as rough estimates.

Source: AH Analytics, RTCI • Created with Datawrapper

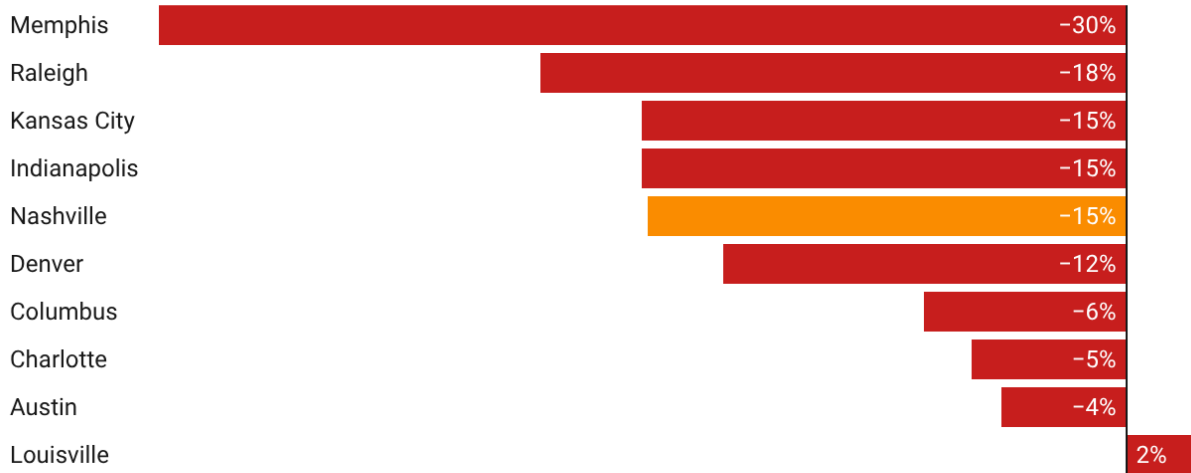
The data in Chart 2 should be approached cautiously, as a rough estimate. RTCI numbers for Nashville describe a much larger violent crime reduction in 2025 (20%) than MNPDP numbers (which show a decline of 14%). In short, we cannot yet say with certainty how much violent crime fell in Nashville and its peer cities in 2025. However, it seems likely that Nashville experienced a larger-than-average decline in violent crime in 2025.

What about property crimes? Preliminary MNPDP data show that property crime in Nashville fell by an estimated 12% from 2024 to 2025, similar to the average property crime decline recorded in preliminary 2025 RTCI figures, shown below in Chart 3.⁴

⁴ Note that Chart 3, which uses preliminary 2025 RTCI figures, shows a larger decline in property crime than MNPDP ARM data. This underscores why RTCI data should be treated as preliminary estimates.

Chart 3: Changes in UCR Part 1 Property Crime, 2024 to 2025

% Change in burglaries, larcenies, and motor vehicle thefts



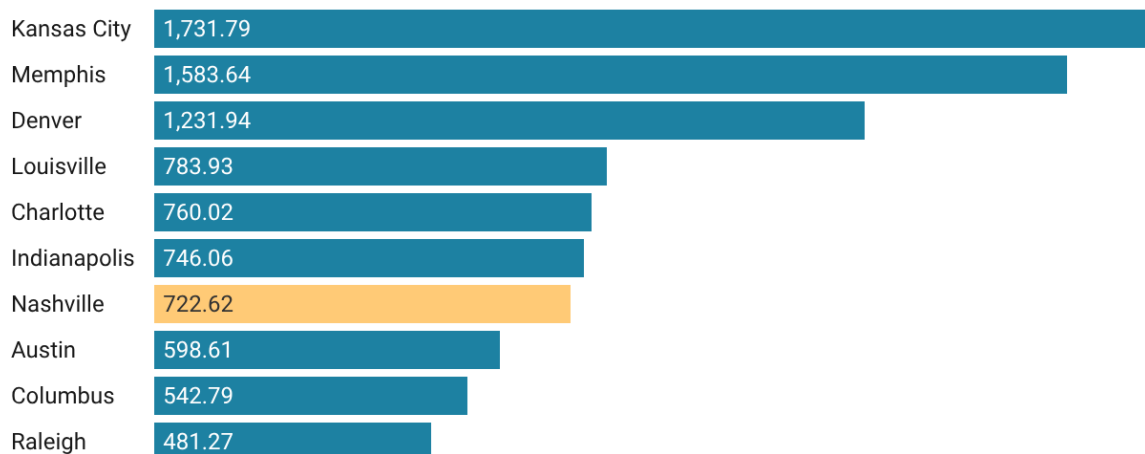
RTCI data are highly preliminary. Definitions of larceny crime and reporting practices vary widely. As a result, these numbers should be treated as preliminary, rough estimates.

Source: AH Analytics, RTCI • Created with Datawrapper

Motor vehicle theft spiked in 2021 and 2022, driven by vulnerabilities in certain Hyundai and Kia models, before beginning to decline in 2024. According to preliminary MNPd data, between 2024 and 2025, motor vehicle theft fell in Nashville by 19%. Preliminary RTCI data for 2025 suggest that this decline was smaller than the decrease in most peer cities. However, Nashville's overall rate of motor vehicle theft — 722 per 100,000 residents in 2024, the most recent year for which official FBI UCR data are available — is lower than most of its peer cities, as shown in Chart 4 below.

Chart 4: Motor Vehicle Theft Rate, 2024

Motor vehicle thefts per 100,000 residents



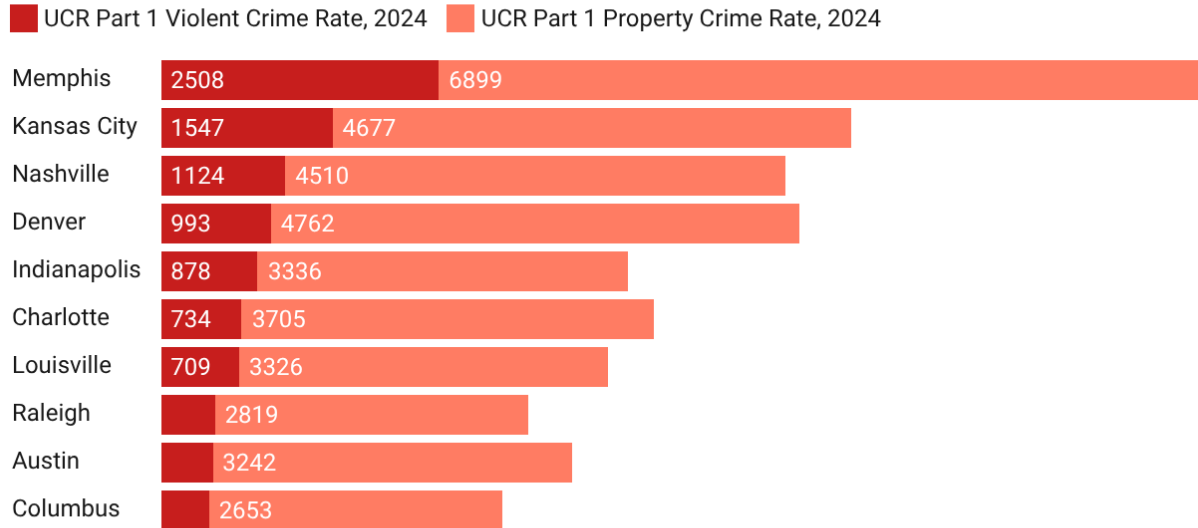
Source: Crime Data Tool • Created with Datawrapper

Rates of Crime Remain High

Nashville made notable progress in reducing homicides and violent crime in 2025. However, Nashville's overall crime rate continues to be higher than most peer cities. Chart 5 below shows UCR Part 1 crime rates for Nashville and its peer cities, using 2024 FBI UCR data, the most recent complete FBI data.

Chart 5: UCR Part 1 Violent and Property Crime Rates, 2024

Per 100,000 residents



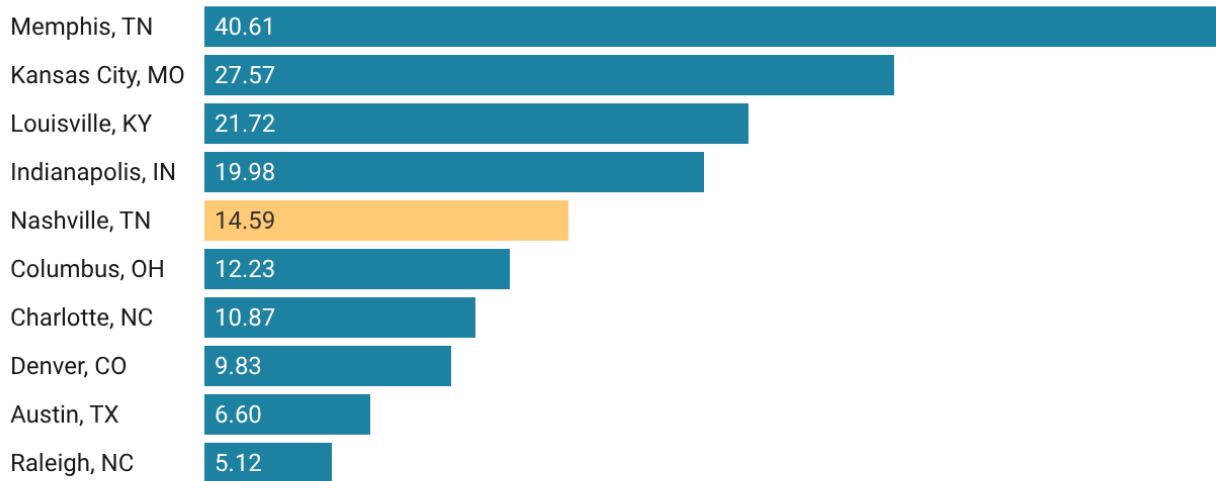
Source: Jacob Kaplan, Crime Data Tool • Created with Datawrapper

Chart 5 does not reflect Nashville's progress in reducing crime in 2025. Nor does it capture peer-city progress. Nashville experienced a larger decrease in homicides than most peer cities. But homicides account for only a fraction of total UCR Part 1 crimes. Nashville's overall crime decline in 2025 appears similar to that of peer cities. When the FBI releases official UCR statistics for 2025 later this year, they will almost certainly show that Nashville's overall level of serious violent crime (murders, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and serious property crime (burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft) appear to be higher than most peer cities.

Nashville's homicide rate remains high as well. In 2024, it was in the upper half of its peer group, as shown in Chart 6.

Chart 6: Homicide Rates, 2024

Murders and non-negligent manslaughter per 100,000 residents



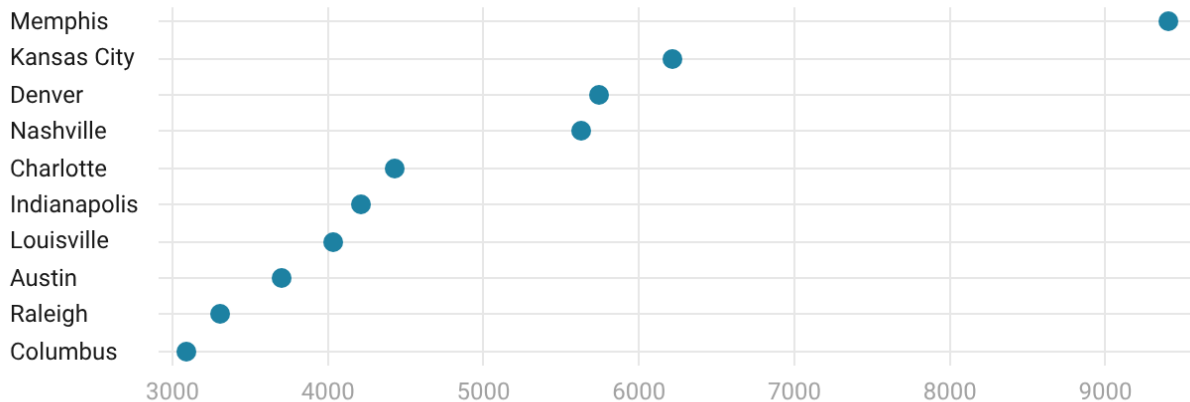
Source: Jacob Kaplan, Crime Data Tool • Created with Datawrapper

Nashville's 2025 homicide decline appears to have lowered its homicide rate to approximately 9 per 100,000 residents, indicating real progress. But homicide is only one component of serious crime. Nashville's overall UCR Part 1 crime rate remains high.

Chart 7 below shows total UCR Part 1 crime rates (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft) for Nashville and its peer cities.

Chart 7: Total UCR Part 1 Index Crime, 2024

Total UCR Part 1 crime rates per 100,000 residents.



Source: Jacob Kaplan, Crime Data Tool • Created with Datawrapper

The preceding charts present crime trend data through 2024, the last year for which official UCR Part 1 data are available. The FBI will release 2025 data later this year. The data will show that Nashville's crime rate, and the crime rates of most peer cities, will have declined. However, Nashville's overall levels of UCR Part 1 crime will most likely remain high relative to peer cities.

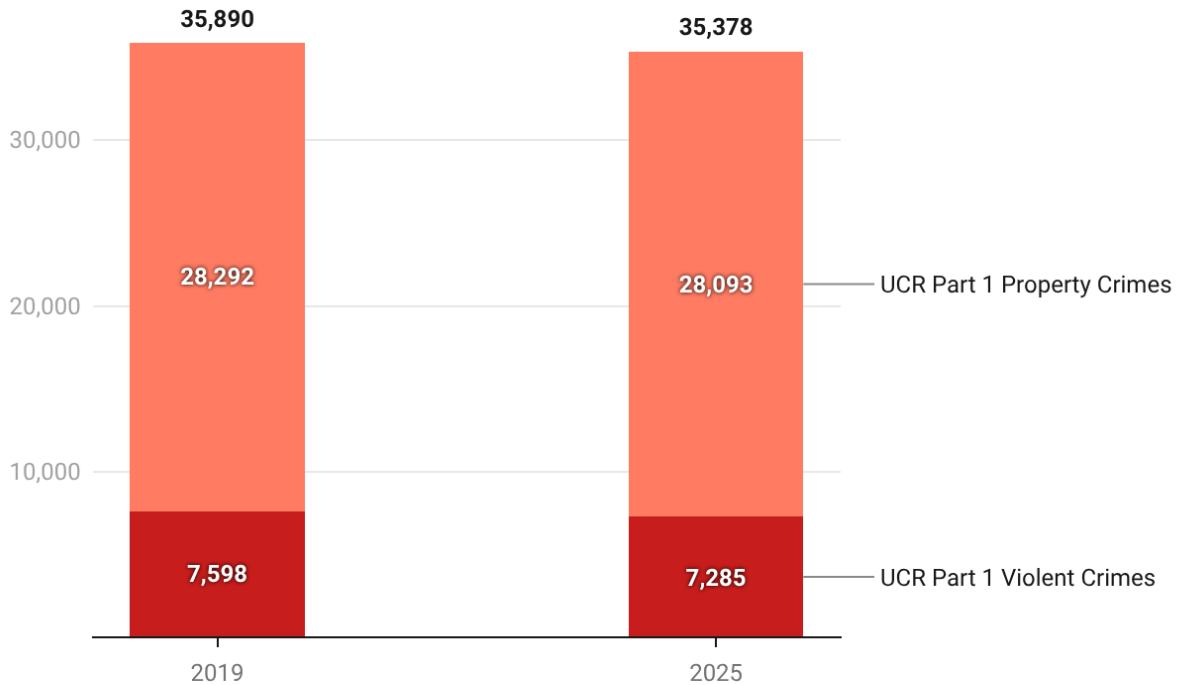
In short, 2025 was a year of progress. However, Nashville continues to face significant public safety challenges.

Recovering from the Pandemic

In 2020, the nation's murder rate jumped 29%, the largest single-year increase the FBI has recorded since it began tracking homicides in the 1960s. In cities with populations above 250,000, the increase was even steeper at approximately 35%. Homicide rates and assaults involving guns continued to rise in 2021 before gradually starting to fall in most U.S. cities in late 2022 and 2023. However, a surge in motor vehicle thefts, driven largely by vulnerabilities in certain Hyundai and Kia models, and public perceptions of rising shoplifting contributed to a public sense that crime was still rising sharply.

Crime rates in Nashville rose during this period, in line with national trends, and then began to fall — though somewhat more slowly than in most U.S. cities. At the end of 2024, the most recent year for which FBI figures were available, Nashville's UCR Part 1 crime rate was still higher than before the pandemic. But preliminary figures suggest that Nashville's UCR Part 1 violent crime and property crime rates fell below pre-pandemic levels during 2025. **Preliminary MNPd data show that Nashville's homicide rate in 2025 was approximately 22% lower than in 2019. The violent crime rate in 2025 was approximately 6% lower, and the property crime rate was approximately 3% lower.**

Chart 8 compares UCR Part 1 violent crime and property crime counts for 2019 — the year before the pandemic — with preliminary 2025 figures. It shows that in 2025, Nashville had fewer violent crimes and fewer property crimes than before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the decline in counts is very small: a 0.7% decline in property crime counts, a 4.1% decline in violent crime counts, and a 1.4% decline in total UCR Part 1 crime counts.

Chart 8: Nashville Crime Counts, Pre- and Post-Pandemic

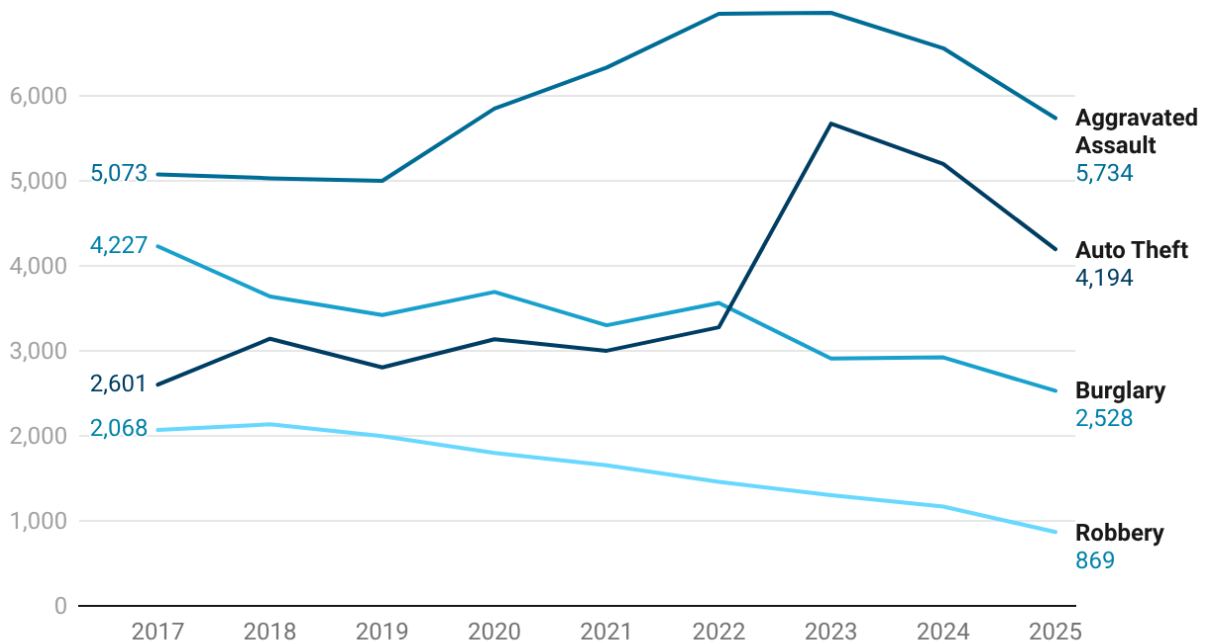
Source: MNPd Crime Initiative Book • Created with Datawrapper

Chart 8 understates Nashville's crime decline by not adjusting for Nashville's growing population during this period. Focusing on rates instead of counts reveals a larger crime decline: violent crime rates fell by approximately 6% during this period, while property crime rates fell by approximately 3%.

Changes in Crime Composition

UCR Part 1 crime fell from 2019 to 2025. However, the small declines in overall violent crime and property crime rates conceal noteworthy changes in the composition of crime.

Chart 9 uses MNPd data to present crime trends for four types of crime: aggravated assaults, motor vehicle or auto thefts, burglaries, and robberies. It excludes larceny thefts and homicides. The number of larceny crimes is so large (21,371 in 2025) that it would have distorted the scale of the chart. The number of homicides (67 in 2025) is so small it would have been hard to read.

Chart 9: Nashville Crime Counts, 2017-2025

This chart presents information on crime counts, not rates.

Source: MNPDP • Created with Datawrapper

The COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. Chart 9 shows that aggravated assaults and auto thefts rose sharply in 2021 and 2022, and remain higher than they were before the pandemic. In contrast, robbery has fallen sharply.

The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) provides additional details on these crime trends. Reviewing NIBRS data for Nashville reveals several significant changes between 2019 and 2024:

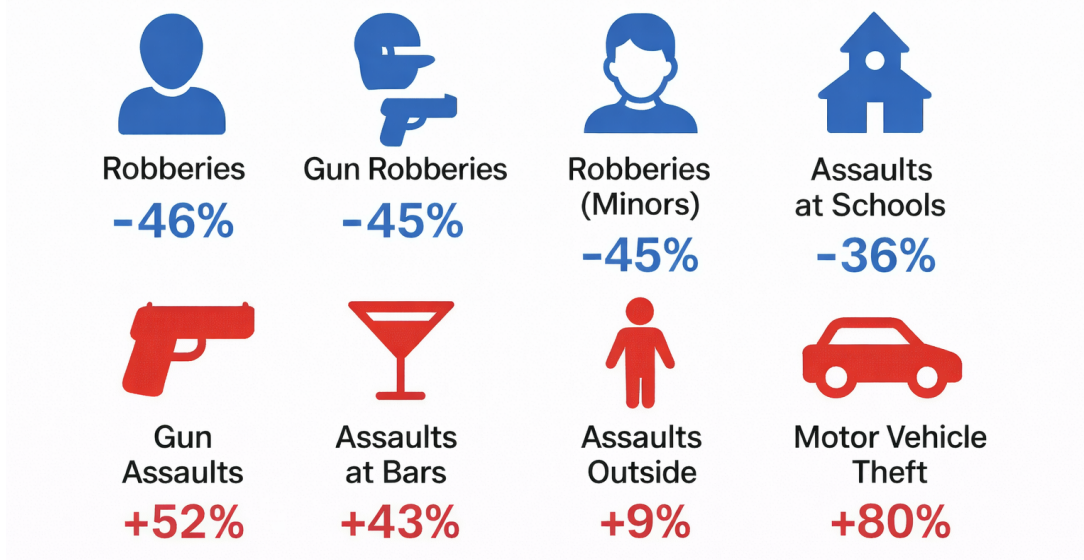
- Robberies have fallen dramatically.** Between 2019 and 2024, NIBRS data show that Nashville experienced a 46% decline in robbery rates and a 45% decline in robberies involving handguns. (The decline is even steeper through 2025: preliminary MNPDP data show a 57% drop in robbery rates from 2019 to 2025.)
- Youth victimization rates fell as schools have reopened.** From 2019 to 2024, reported aggravated assaults by minors, where the age of the offender was known, fell by 12%. Aggravated assaults at schools fell by 36%. Robberies against youth (under the age of 18) fell by 45%.⁵
- Aggravated assaults at bars and nightclubs have risen.** Aggravated assaults in bars and nightclubs increased by 43% as bars and nightclubs reopened.

⁵ This comes with a caveat: NIBRS data did not capture the age of most offenders — for the simple fact that most offenders are not known. NIBRS data suggests that juvenile crime is declining but does not definitely establish that trend.

- **Motor vehicle thefts and thefts from motor vehicles have risen sharply.** Between 2019 and 2024, NIBRS data show motor vehicle theft counts rose by approximately 80%, and thefts from motor vehicles rose by 15%. (Motor vehicle theft *rates* have declined somewhat since their 2023 peak but remain approximately 46% above 2019 levels, based on MNPD data through 2025.)
- **Between 2019 and 2024, aggravated assaults with handguns increased by 52%.** Over the past decade (2014 to 2024), aggravated assaults involving handguns increased by 101%. This trend has direct implications for policing strategy and for the violence-reduction approaches discussed in Section Five.

These divergent trends suggest a meaningful shift in the composition of violent crime in Nashville. Gun robberies have fallen sharply, consistent with the broader robbery decline. But aggravated assaults involving firearms — a measure of interpersonal conflict rather than instrumental crime — have increased by 52%. Figure 1 presents these findings graphically. Together, these findings suggest that the nature of gun violence in Nashville has shifted even as some categories of gun crime have improved. **Robbery has declined substantially, but interpersonal violence involving firearms has intensified. Understanding this shift, rather than focusing solely on aggregate crime rates, is essential for designing effective public safety strategies.**

Figure 1: Selected Crimes in Nashville, 2019–2024



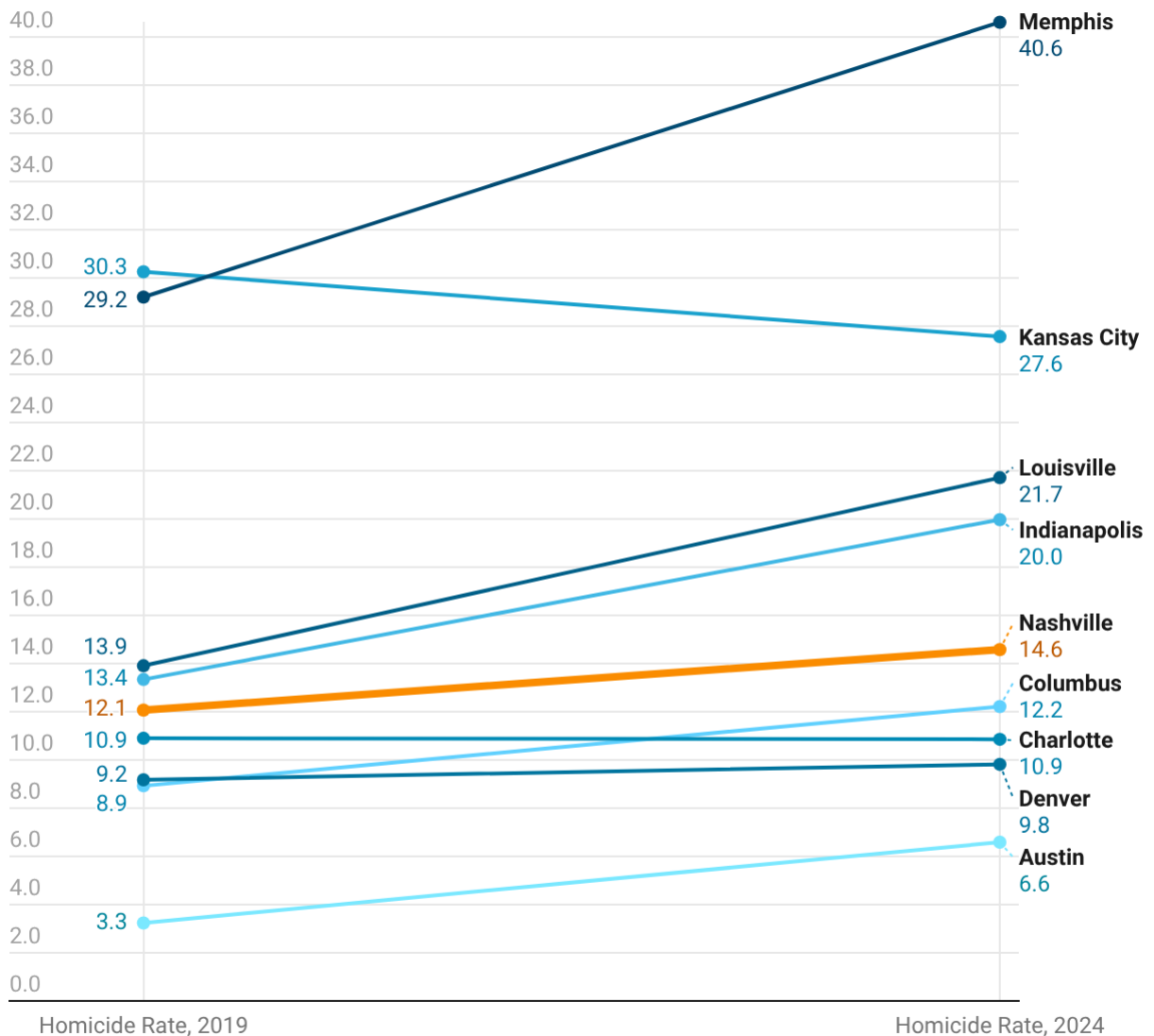
Long-Term Trends

Stepping back to the full decade, and returning to the Kaplan/UCR data used for cross-city comparisons, how do Nashville's crime trends compare with those of peer cities?

Chart 10 shows Nashville and peer-city homicide rates from 2019 to 2024, the most recent year for which FBI UCR data are available.

Chart 10: Changes in Homicide Rates, 2019 to 2024

Per 100,000 residents



This chart excludes Raleigh, due to probable 2019 data errors.

Source: Crime Data Tool • Created with Datawrapper

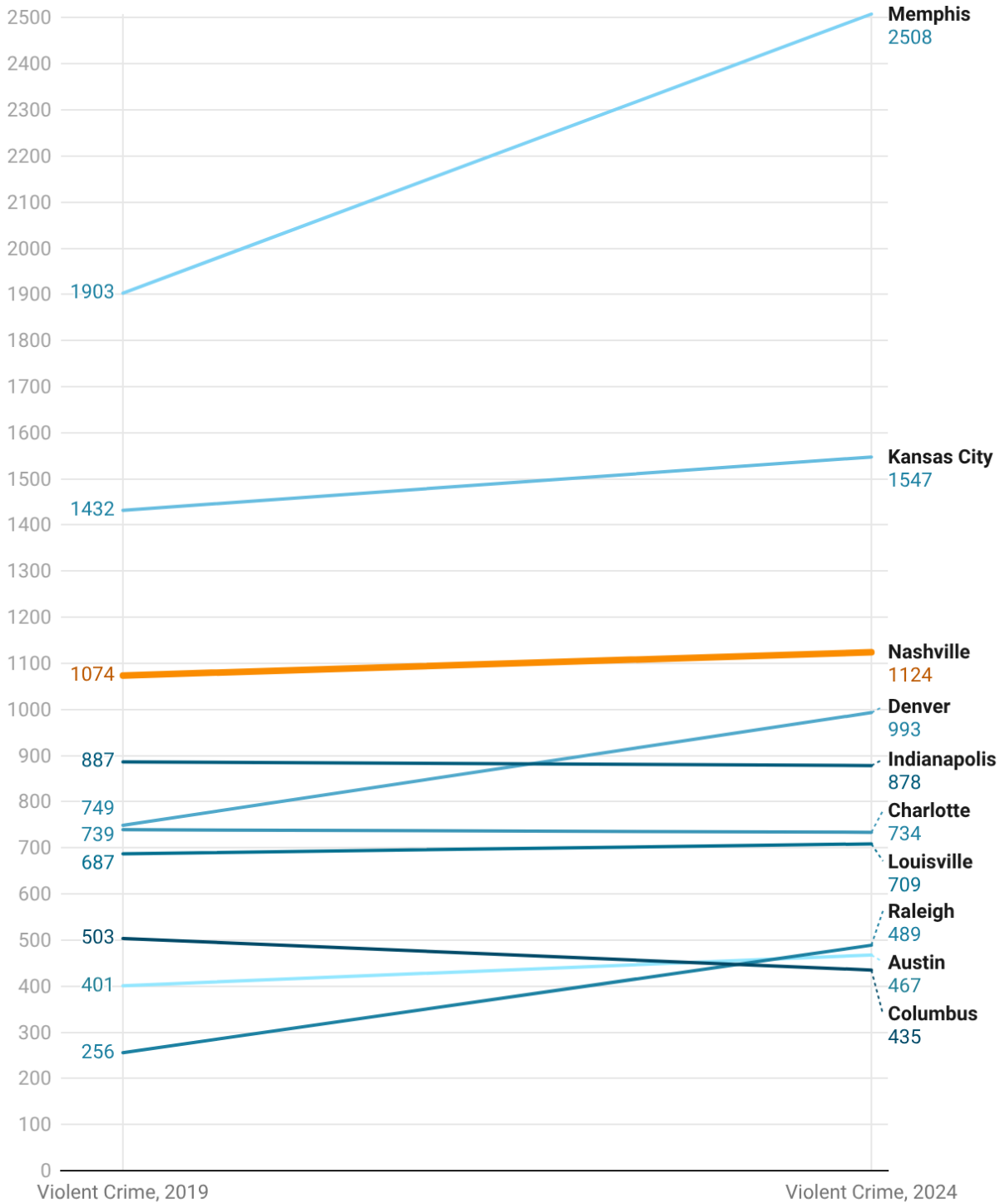
As noted earlier, **Nashville's 2025 homicide decline pushed its homicide rate even lower — to approximately 9 per 100,000 residents.** This represents real progress and has brought Nashville's homicide rate in line with the average for peer cities. Despite the recent decline, Nashville's current homicide rate is still more than 60% higher than its historic low (5.51 murders per 100,000 residents in 2013).

Violent Crime and Aggravated Assaults

Homicides are important but extremely rare. Chart 11 below broadens the frame to include all UCR Part 1 violent crimes.

Chart 11: UCR Part 1 Violent Crime Rates, 2019 to 2024

Per 100,000 residents



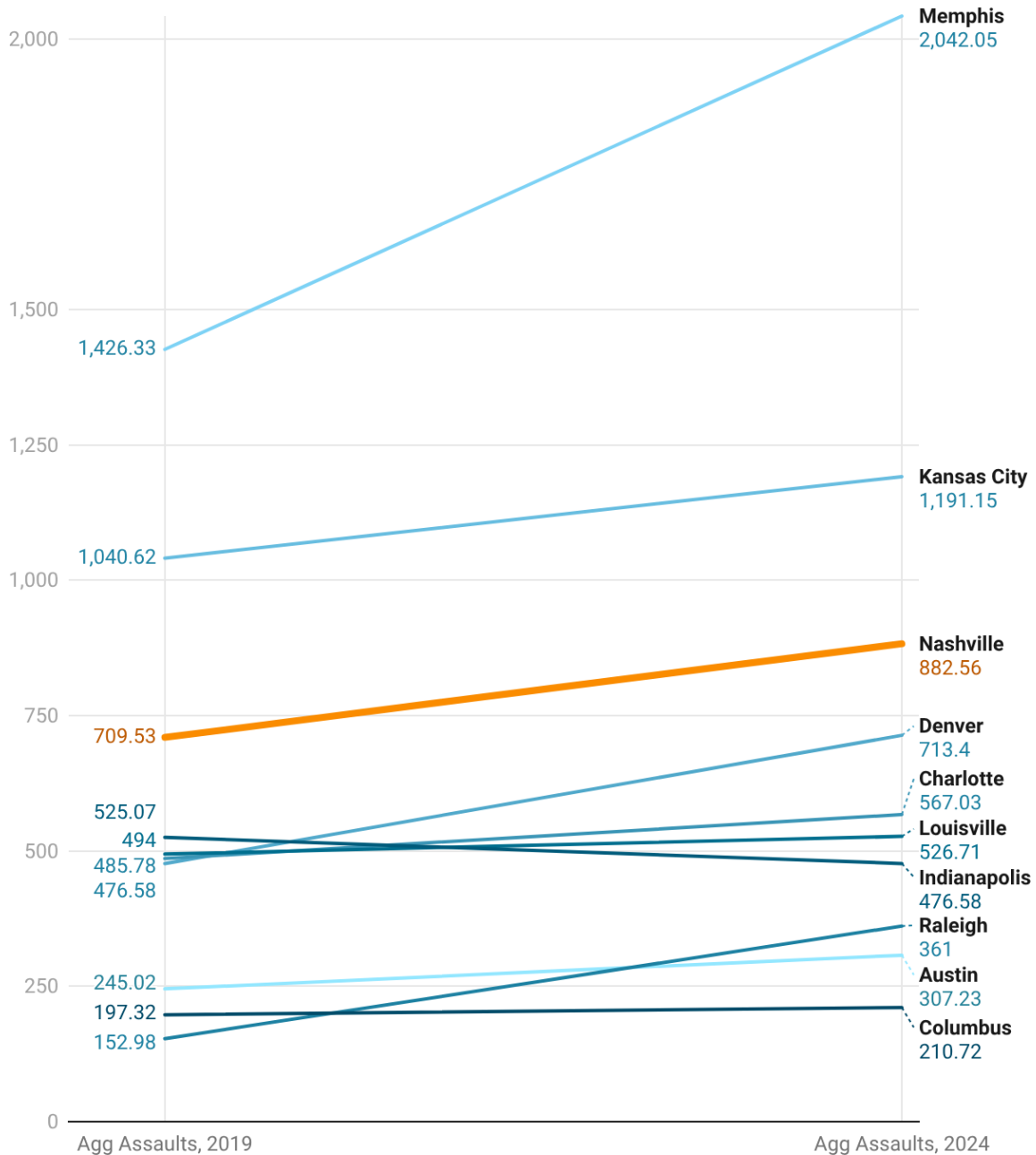
Source: Crime Data Tool • Created with Datawrapper

Violent crime rates for Nashville and peer cities varied widely. Denver (+97%) and Memphis (+32%) saw large increases. Kansas City saw a small decrease. Indianapolis and Charlotte have remained stable over this period of time. Indianapolis (+8%) saw a small increase. So did Nashville (+5%). In contrast, Austin and Columbus saw small declines.

Chart 12 shows that aggravated assault has emerged as a particular challenge for Nashville.

Chart 12: Aggravated Assault Rates, 2019 to 2024

Per 100,000 residents



Source: Crime Data Tool • Created with Datawrapper

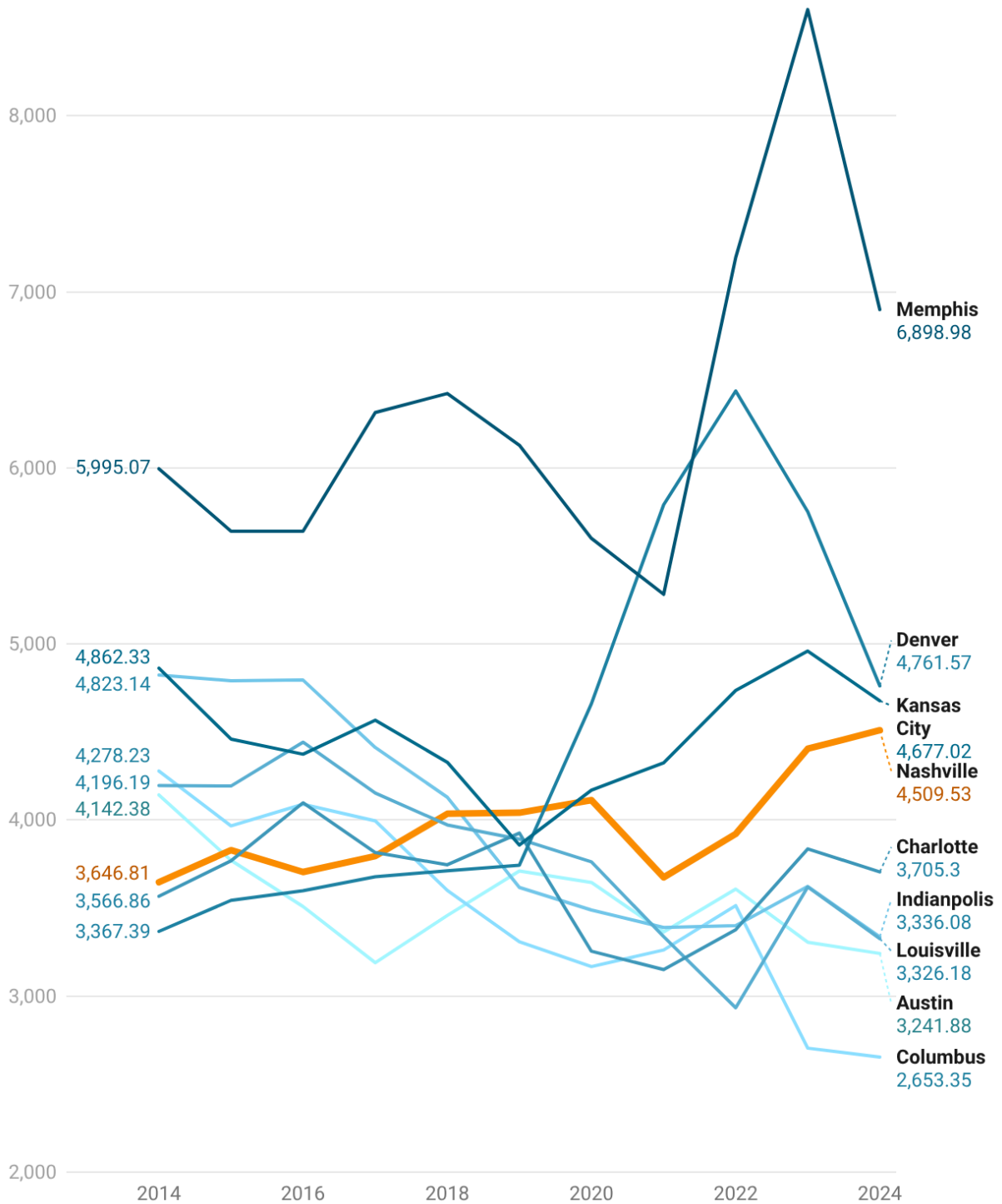
Aggravated assault rates in Nashville fell by approximately 13% in 2025, but they remain approximately 12% higher than in 2019. FBI crime data for 2025 is not yet available; however, we can examine trends in aggravated assault rates in Nashville and its peer cities from 2019 to 2024. Over this time period, Nashville's total aggravated assault rate rose approximately 24%, placing it in the upper half of peer-city growth along with Austin, which saw a 25% increase. Denver (+48%) and Memphis (+43%) saw larger increases; while Charlotte (+1%), Kansas City (+14%), Louisville (+3%), and Columbus (+7%) grew more slowly. Conversely, aggravated assault rates in Indianapolis declined by 9% during this period. In absolute terms, Nashville's rate remained high, trailing only Memphis and Kansas City.

Aggravated assaults remain one of Nashville's most pressing long-term challenges. This assessment aligns with the NIBRS finding that aggravated assaults involving handguns rose 52% between 2019 and 2024.

Property Crimes.

Property crime trends present a different but similarly challenging picture. Chart 13 shows property crime trends for Nashville and peer cities between 2014 and 2024.

Chart 13: UCR Part 1 Property Crime Rates, 2014-2024



Source: Jacob Kaplan, Crime Data Tool • Created with Datawrapper

Summary

Nashville made significant progress in reducing crime in 2025; particularly homicide, which fell 34%, a larger decline than in most peer cities. Violent and property crime rates fell below pre-pandemic levels for the first time. However, Nashville's overall crime rate remains higher than most peer cities, and two categories — aggravated assault and motor vehicle theft — remain well above 2019 levels. NIBRS data reveal that the composition of violent crime has shifted in concerning ways: aggravated assaults involving handguns rose 52% between 2019 and 2024, even as robberies involving handguns fell by 45%. These patterns have implications for police staffing, deployment, and technology — the subjects of the sections that follow.

Key findings include the following:

- **In 2025, homicide rates fell faster in Nashville than in peer cities.** Preliminary MNPDP data show that Nashville's homicide rate fell approximately 34% from 2024 to 2025. Homicide rates in Nashville's peer cities fell approximately 20% during this period.
- **Nashville's violent crime rate fell by approximately 14% from 2024 to 2025.** Preliminary estimates suggest peer cities experienced roughly similar declines in violent crime rates, on the order of 15-16%.
- **Nashville's serious violent crime and property crime rates appear to have fallen below pre-pandemic levels during 2025.** Preliminary MNPDP data show that Nashville's homicide rate in 2025 was approximately 22% lower than in 2019. Its violent crime rate in 2025 was approximately 6% lower, and property crime rate was approximately 3% lower.
- **Aggravated assault rates and motor vehicle theft rates remain significantly higher than before the pandemic-era crime spike.** Burglaries, by contrast, fell sharply. Between 2019 and 2024, aggravated assaults involving guns rose sharply (up 52%) while robberies involving guns fell sharply (down 45%).
- **Despite significant progress in reducing crime levels in 2025, Nashville's overall rate of serious violent crime and serious property crime remains higher than most peer cities.** Official FBI UCR data for 2024 show that Nashville's total UCR Part 1 violent crime rate was higher than every peer city except Kansas City and Memphis.

In short, 2025 was a year of genuine progress, but crime rates remain elevated relative to peer cities.

A Cautionary Note

As readers consider the findings above, they should consider three additional points.

Reported crime versus actual crime. The crime rates discussed in this paper refer to reported crime rates. However, most crimes are never reported. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), only about 30% of property crimes and 45% of violent crimes are reported to police. While reported crime counts undercount victimization, they provide a useful measure for whether crime is rising or falling. Reporting rates do shift over longer periods, sometimes substantially, but they are generally stable enough in the short term that significant year-over-year changes in reported crime reliably reflect changes in actual crime.

Reporting practices and habits almost certainly vary across cities, in ways that are not well understood. As a result, the FBI warns against using the crime data it publishes to rank cities (although crime analysts, journalists, and researchers routinely do so). Focusing on crime trends within a single city reduces the risk that cities may report crime differently.

But cross-city comparisons have a second, more fundamental limitation: they describe citywide averages, and averages can obscure what is arguably the most important fact about serious crime in American cities. Crime, and especially violent crime, is not evenly distributed. It is hyper-concentrated, geographically and among a small number of people, in ways that have direct implications for how public safety strategies should be designed.

Crime (particularly violent crime) is highly concentrated. According to the 2023 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), some 1–2% of people aged 12 or older experience a violent victimization in a given year. But this statistic overstates the risk for most people and dramatically understates the risks for some. Studies across numerous cities have found that up to 50% of a city's criminal incidents occur within just 5% of its street segments. Similarly, a small percentage of offenders (in many circumstances, just 2%-5%) is responsible for up to 50% or more of total crime.⁶ For people who do not live in these micro-locations, who are not part of high-risk groups, who are not part of the small social networks where serious violence concentrates, who are not involved in criminal behavior, and who do not face intimate-partner violence, the likelihood of experiencing community violence is low.

The flip side is equally important: a very small number of people face extraordinarily high risks. Gun violence in American cities is intensely concentrated in a small number of places and among small numbers of people. A study of gunshot injuries in two neighborhoods in Boston with substantial Cape Verdean populations found that roughly 85% of all gunshot victims were members of a single social network comprising less than 5% of that community's population. Similar patterns of extreme network concentration have been documented in Chicago, where the same study found that 70% of all victims of non-fatal gunshot injuries could be found in a co-arrest network comprising less than 6% of the city's population. **Within these networks, the individuals at greatest risk to shoot or be shot often represent a tiny fraction of a city's total population.**⁷

Black Americans are disproportionately affected by violence. Young Black men face a particularly acute crisis of violence nationwide, experiencing firearm homicide victimization rates up to 22.5 times higher than their white peers. Black victims of crime are also less likely to have crimes solved than white and Hispanic victims. At the same time, Black Americans experience homicide at a higher rate than white and Hispanic Americans. **In 2020, the murders of white victims were 50% more likely to be solved than the murders of Black victims and 30% more likely to be solved than the murders of Hispanic victims.**⁸

⁶ "Five Things About Deterrence," June 5, 2016. National Institute of Justice, 2022. <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-about-deterrence>. For the foundational research on geographic concentration, see David Weisburd, "The Law of Crime Concentration at Places," *Criminology*, May 6, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12070> For concentration among individuals, see Thomas Abt's book, *Bleeding Out: The Causes and Cures of Violence in American Cities*, 2019.

⁷ Andrew Papachristos, Anthony Braga, and David Hureau, "Social Networks and the Risk of Gunshot Injury." *Journal of Urban Health* 89, no. 6 (December 2012): 992–1003. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-012-9703-9>. Andrew Papachristos, and Christopher Wildeman, "Network Exposure and Homicide Victimization in an African American Community." *American Journal of Public Health* 104, no. 1 (January 2014): 143–150. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301441>.

⁸ "Delivering Accountability: A Plan To Stop Crime in Our Communities," The Center for American Progress, January 29, 2026. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/delivering-accountability-a-plan-to-stop-crime-in-our-communities/>

The people who experience the highest rates of gun violence and other types of crime often live in neighborhoods that have experienced decades of disinvestment and economic insecurity. These neighborhoods often have high levels of concentrated poverty. Residents frequently struggle to gain access to affordable housing, health care, employment opportunities, and clean and green public spaces. There is strong evidence to suggest that investing in these neighborhoods, such as funding summer youth job programs, providing health care, and access to affordable housing, along with other services can enhance community safety.⁹

However, a robust body of evidence also underscores the importance of focus. In many cities, the individuals driving — and falling victim to — the majority of serious violent crime make up as little as 0.5% of the total population. By concentrating on these social networks and on the specific micro-locations where violence clusters, cities can reduce harm without over-policing entire neighborhoods.

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⁹ Jennifer Doleac and Anna Harvey, “Stemming Violence by Investing in Civic Goods,” Vital City, March 2, 2022, <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/stemmingviolence-investing-in-civic-goods>.

¹⁰ Andrew Papachristos, “Network Exposure and Homicide Victimization in an African American Community,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 104(1), 143-150. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301441> For research on crime concentration, see David Weisburd, “The Law of Crime Concentration at Places,” *Criminology* (2015); Anthony Braga, Andrew Papachristos, David Hureau, “The Concentration and Stability of Gun Violence at Micro Places,” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* (2010). For the risks faced by black men, see CDC WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports, age- and race-specific homicide victimization rates. For a meta-review of what works in reducing crime, see Thomas Abt & David Winship, “What Works in Reducing Community Violence,” USAID. 2016. For the importance of focusing interventions on the highest-risk people, see the National Academies of Sciences’s *Proactive Policing: Effects on Crime and Communities*, 2017.

Section Two: Budgets, Staffing, & Compensation

Policing is not the only way cities respond to crime and disorder. Policymakers have a number of evidence-based strategies to reduce crime, and many do not involve the police directly. A 2020 John Jay College of Criminal Justice report identified seven evidence-based strategies to reduce crime that do not involve the police. They included improving the physical environment (e.g., upgrading lighting, “greening” vacant lots), strengthening anti-violence social norms and peer relationships, engaging and supporting youth, reducing substance abuse, mitigating financial stress, reducing the harmful effects of the justice process, and confronting the gun problem.¹¹ That said, both the academic research and public opinion support the idea that police play a critical role in preventing crime and disorder. Even in “high crime neighborhoods,” crime is highly concentrated, generally in what researchers call “micro-places” and within high-risk networks. Specific strategies such as problem-oriented policing and “hot spot” policing can decrease crime in those areas.

Increasing the size of a city’s police department also appears to decrease crime. A number of studies have shown that an increase in police force size leads to both reductions in property and violent crime. This work further suggests that investments in police personnel are cost-effective and that many U.S. cities may be underpoliced. A widely cited 2022 study by Aaron Chalfin, Benjamin Hansen, Emily Weisburst, and Morgan Williams Jr. found that hiring 10 to 17 additional police officers prevents, on average, one homicide per year. On a per capita basis, these homicide reductions were twice as large for Black victims as for white victims. The same study found that larger police forces made *fewer* arrests for UCR Part 1 index crime, and that these reductions in serious-crime arrests were four to six times larger for Black city residents than for white residents. In other words, adding police officers did not appear to increase racial disparities for the most serious charges. However, more officers did produce a significant increase in arrests for low-level “quality-of-life” offenses, especially arrests for liquor law violations and drug possession. The increase in these specific low-level arrests was approximately three times larger for Black city residents than for white city residents.¹²

The implication for Nashville is that what police do matters as much as the staffing level. Increasing police presence and orienting police toward serious-crime deterrence and problem-solving, rather than low-level quality-of-life enforcement, can produce the crime-reduction benefits without the racial-disparity costs.¹³

¹¹ “Reducing Crime Without the Police,” the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Center,” <https://johnjayrec.nyc/2020/11/09/av2020/>. Policymakers can also address the high levels of concentrated poverty and segregation that are associated with crime (the so-called root causes of crime). For more on racial inequality and the root cause of crime, see Chapter Three of the National Academies of Sciences’ 2023 report, “Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice: Science, Practice, and Policy.” <https://doi.org/10.17226/2422>.

¹² Aaron Chalfin, Benjamin Hansen, Emily Weisburst, and Morgan C. Williams Jr., “Police Force Size and Civilian Race,” *American Economic Review: Insights* June 2022, 4 (2): 139-58. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aeri.20200792&ref=vitalcitynyc.org>.

¹³ Morgan Williams, Jr., “Weighing the Impacts of Policing,” *Vital City*, January 15, 2022. <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/weighing-the-impacts-of-policing/>. See also Aaron Chalfin, Benjamin Hansen, Emily Weisburd, and Morgan C. Williams Jr., “Police Force Size and Civilian Race,” *American Economic Review: Insights* June 2022, 4 (2): 139-58. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aeri.20200792&ref=vitalcitynyc.org>.

Spending

In 2020, the Vera Institute of Justice — an influential research and advocacy organization focused on criminal justice reform — compiled data on police spending in 72 U.S. cities, including Nashville. Vera examined each city’s general fund, which is the chief operating account used for core day-to-day municipal services. Supported by general tax revenue, general operating funds manage government functions, such as public safety and administration, that are not legally restricted to specialized capital, grant, or enterprise accounts. While the general fund is only a portion of a total municipal budget, it represents the primary pool of unrestricted resources and offers the clearest window into a city’s spending priorities. Table 2 presents Vera’s findings.

Table 2: What Policing Costs, FY 2020

Vera compiled data from the fiscal year 2020 adopted budgets of 72 of the biggest cities across the United States to determine what policing cost.

City	General Operating Fund Police Budgets (FY2020)	% of General Operating Fund Spent on Policing	General Operating Fund Spending per Resident on Policing
Kansas City	\$262,247,405	43%	\$510
Austin	\$491,265,529	40%	\$451
Charlotte	\$285,877,585	39%	\$327
Memphis	\$274,511,008	38%	\$419
Columbus	\$347,780,657	37%	\$398
Indianapolis	\$283,571,003	35%	\$279
Louisville	\$191,988,200	29%	\$297
Nashville	\$216,790,900	21%	\$311
Raleigh	\$109,694,902	21%	\$233
Denver	\$277,927,093	17%	\$355

Source: Vera Institute • Created with Datawrapper

Vera found that Nashville spent a relatively small share of its general operating budget on its police department — 21%. Among the peer cities identified in this report, only Denver spent less.

To what extent have these patterns changed five years later? Table 3 updates Vera’s analysis using fiscal year (FY) 2025 data. It shows that in FY 2025, Nashville spent less of its own resources on policing than it did in FY 2020. Nashville spends a smaller share of its general operating fund on policing than peer cities. Only Denver spends a smaller portion of its general fund on policing, and Denver’s seemingly low rate is misleading.¹⁴

Table 3: What Nashville and Peer Cities Spent on Policing, FY 2025

City	General Operating Fund Appropriations to Police	% of General Operating Fund Spent on Policing ▼	General Operating Fund Spending per Resident on Policing
Charlotte	\$319,664,835	36%	\$339
Memphis	\$300,636,934	35%	\$492
Kansas City	\$294,340,607	35%	\$570
Austin	\$490,669,002	34%	\$494
Columbus	\$397,552,365	32%	\$426
Indianapolis	\$288,762,208	28%	\$324
Louisville	\$229,998,900	27%	\$359
Nashville	\$308,896,100	19%	\$438
Raleigh	\$138,904,283	19%	\$278
Denver	\$334,625,021	16%	\$376

Please see Appendix C for a detailed discussion of the methodology.

Source: Adopted FY24-25 Budget Books. • Created with Datawrapper

This finding, while striking, should be treated cautiously. Indianapolis, Louisville, Denver, and Nashville all have consolidated city-county governments. As a result, their general funds cover both traditional municipal government spending and county-level functions (e.g., health, courts, and certain social services). This inflates their denominators, resulting in smaller shares of general operating funds spent on police. It is still noteworthy that Nashville’s spending on police as a share of the general fund declined between 2020 and 2025. However, for purposes of cross-city comparison, per capita spending is probably the more reliable cross-city comparison.

¹⁴ The Denver Police Department relies on the general fund less than peer-city police departments (with the exception of Indianapolis, which also has a distinctive funding structure). A dedicated mill levy (property tax) and over \$20 million in funding from the Denver airport for security significantly increases DPD’s total budget. (See Appendix B for more details.)

Among peer cities, Nashville is in the upper middle in per-capita spending on law enforcement but near the bottom in the share of its general operating fund devoted to policing. Higher-crime cities, such as Kansas City and Memphis, allocate much larger proportions of their general funds to policing. So does Austin, a city with the lowest crime rate in this cohort.

Although Nashville devotes a comparatively small share of its general operating funds (i.e., its discretionary budget) to police services, which is the lowest share among peer cities, its per-capita police spending is higher among this cohort. Nashville spends about \$438 per resident on police services, less than Kansas City (\$570), Memphis (\$492), and Austin (\$494), but significantly more than Louisville (\$359). (Denver and Indianapolis's different funding structures make their per capita general fund spending a less meaningful comparison point.)

In short, Nashville is well positioned. It spends a comparatively small share of general operating funds on policing, but that small share translates into per-resident police spending that is higher than average among peer cities.

Staffing

How does this level of spending translate into police staffing and coverage? Table 4 shows the funding and coverage levels provided by city funding.¹⁵

Table 4: Sworn Officers, Vacancies, and Geographic Coverage, Fall 2025

Police	Sworn Officers (authorized)	Sworn Officers per 100,000 Residents	Officers per square mile	Vacancies	Vacancy Rate
Austin	1,819	183	6	324	18%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	1,936	205	6	150	8%
Columbus	2,117	218	9	194	11%
Denver	1,637	225	11	50	3%
Indianapolis	1,743	196	5	300	17%
Kansas City	1,215	248	4	67	12%
Louisville	1,786	164	7	380	27%
Memphis	2,516	412	9	557	22%
Nashville	1,720	244	4	163	9%
Raleigh	796	159	5	57	7%

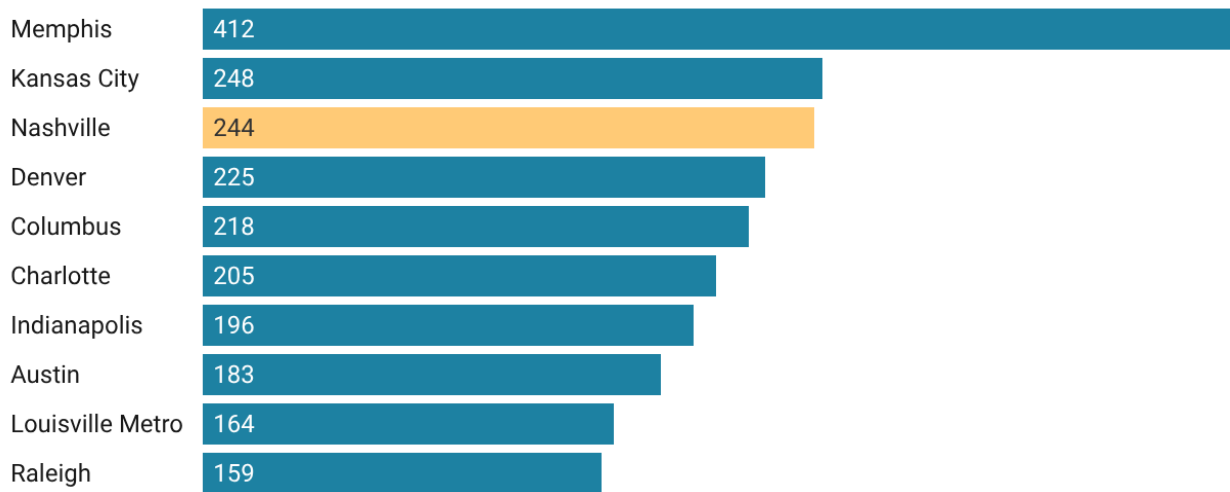
Vacancy rates come from questionnaire responses. They represent the vacancy rate at a specific moment in time and should be treated as very rough estimates.

Source: Peer-city police department questionnaires; FY26 adopted budgets, U.S. Census. See Appendix C for a more detailed discussion. • Created with Datawrapper

¹⁵ Vacancy rate figures were collected by a survey answered by peer-city police departments. These numbers will vary from current vacancy rates. MNPd, for instance, reported a vacancy rate of 160 officers in October 2025. In May 2025, it reported 127 vacancies.

The “Sworn Officers” column shows the number of sworn police officers each city is budgeted for to have its police department at full strength. By these measures, Nashville has a comparatively high number of officers on a per capita basis, with 244 authorized police officers for every 100,000 residents. This is higher than every peer city except for Memphis and Kansas City, which have much higher crime rates, as shown below in Chart 14.

Chart 14: Authorized Police Officers Per 100,000 Residents



Note: Nashville and peer-city police departments have significant police vacancies. As a result, this actual number of police officers per 100,000 residents is significantly smaller than the figures shown in this table, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

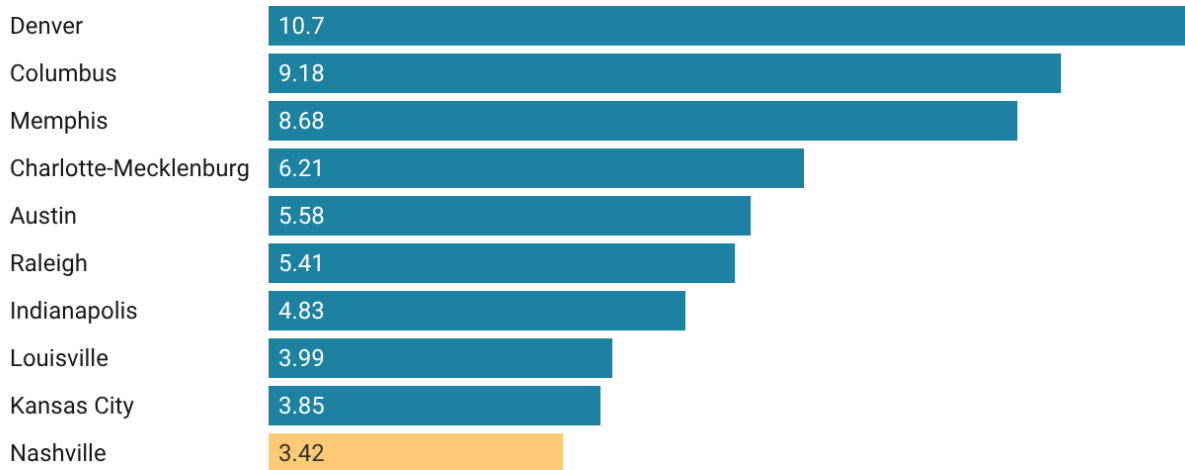
Source: Adopted Budget Books, U.S. Census • Created with Datawrapper

It is worth underscoring that Chart 14 shows how many police officers per 100,000 residents Nashville and its peer cities would have *if every police department was fully staffed*. In fact, we know that police departments are continuing to struggle to fill vacant positions.¹⁶ MNPDP has one of the lowest vacancy rates of any peer-city police department, as noted in Table 4 above, but even Nashville has a 9% officer vacancy rate. As a result, operationally, police departments have less police protection than the above chart suggests.

Coverage

Nashville’s approved budget (in fiscal year 2025) provided for more authorized police officers per capita than peer cities, as shown in Chart 14 above. But MNPDP also covers a larger geographic area than any other peer-city police department, 503 square miles in total. **Compared to peer cities, Nashville has the lowest number of officers per square mile — just 3.42, as shown below in Chart 15.**

¹⁶ Hunter Boehme, Joshua McCrain, Scott Mourtgos, Brandon Tregle, “Police staffing shortages, public awareness, and policy preferences,” *Journal of Criminal Justice*, March-April 2026, Vol. 103.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0047235226000061?via%3Dihub>.

Chart 15: Police Officers Per Square Mile, Fall 2025

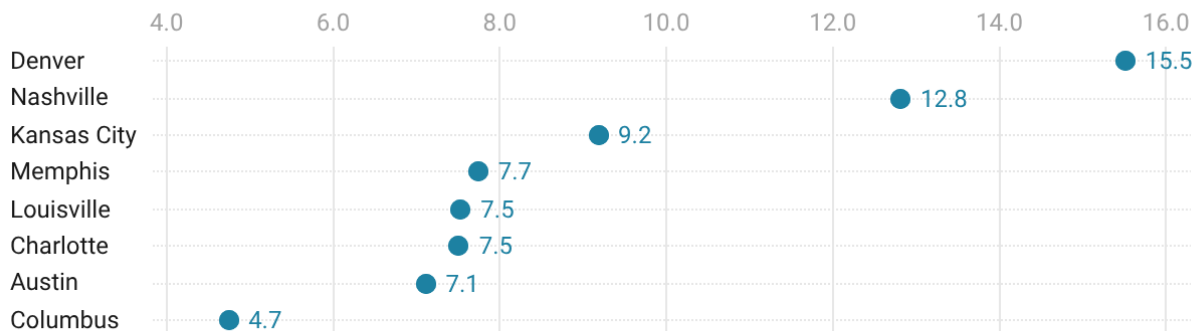
Source: Peer-city surveys, Adopted budget books, U.S. Census • Created with Datawrapper

This figure overstates actual police coverage. Obviously, not all sworn police officers are deployed at once. Sworn officers are divided among shifts, officers go on vacation, get sick, and get injured. As a result, the actual number of sworn police officers working at any given time is quite small. Nevertheless, the broader point stands that, **geographically, compared to other police departments, MNPd is spread thin.**

Response Times

Departments that are spread thin tend to have longer travel times than other departments. That can increase response times and allow offenders to move across precincts, complicating responses. How does Nashville's police department compare to other police departments in this regard?

Chart 16 shows the response time for emergency (i.e., highest priority) calls for Nashville and peer-city police departments that provided this information.

Chart 16: Response Times for Highest Priority Calls (in Minutes)

Denver's response time measure applies to both the two most urgent call types. As a result, this chart most likely overstates Denver's response time to the most urgent calls for service.

Source: Peer-city questionnaire responses. • Created with Datawrapper

In 2024, MNPDP's average response to the highest priority calls was 12.8 minutes — 4 minutes, 24 seconds in the queue, 8 minutes, 40 seconds of travel time. The Denver Police Department measures both the most urgent and a less urgent category of calls. This pushes its response time up. **Setting aside Denver, MNPDP appears to take longer to respond to emergency calls than most peer-city police departments.**¹⁷

Workload

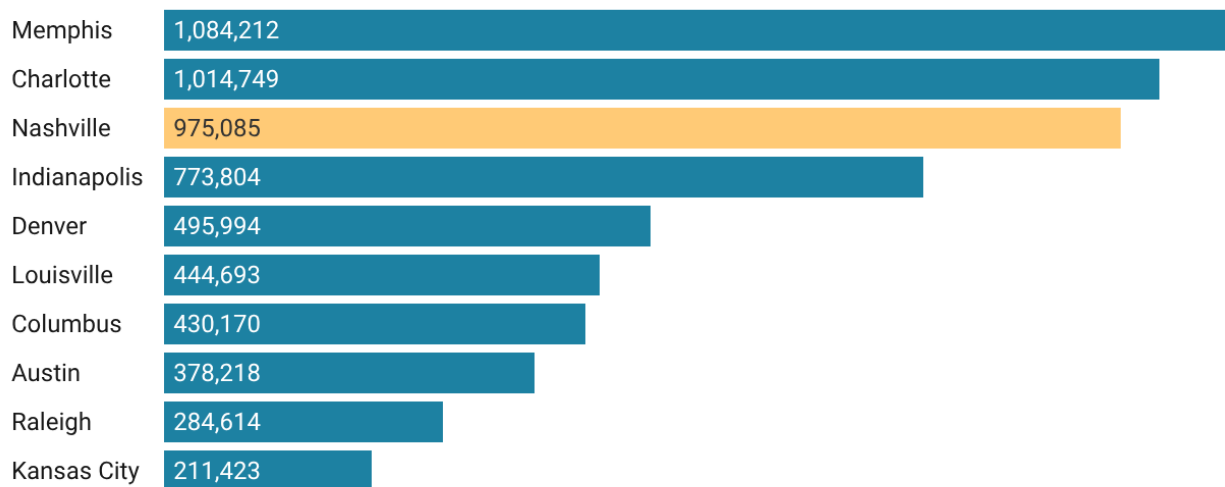
Police departments often use “calls for service” as a measure of patrol officers’ workload, but the term can be misleading. It is commonly assumed to refer only to 911 calls. In practice, however, many cities calculate “calls for service” by counting computer-aided dispatch (CAD) numbers as the underlying unit of measure. A CAD number may be created when someone calls or texts 911, or when a police officer initiates activity in the field. For this reason, departments sometimes distinguish between two types of calls for service: **citizen-initiated** and **officer-initiated**.

This analysis presents information on both total calls for service (which measure both community and police-initiated calls) and calls for service resulting in police dispatch.

Total Calls for Service

Chart 17 presents information on total calls for service, including both citizen-initiated and police-initiated calls for service, in 2024.

Chart 17: Total Calls for Service, 2024



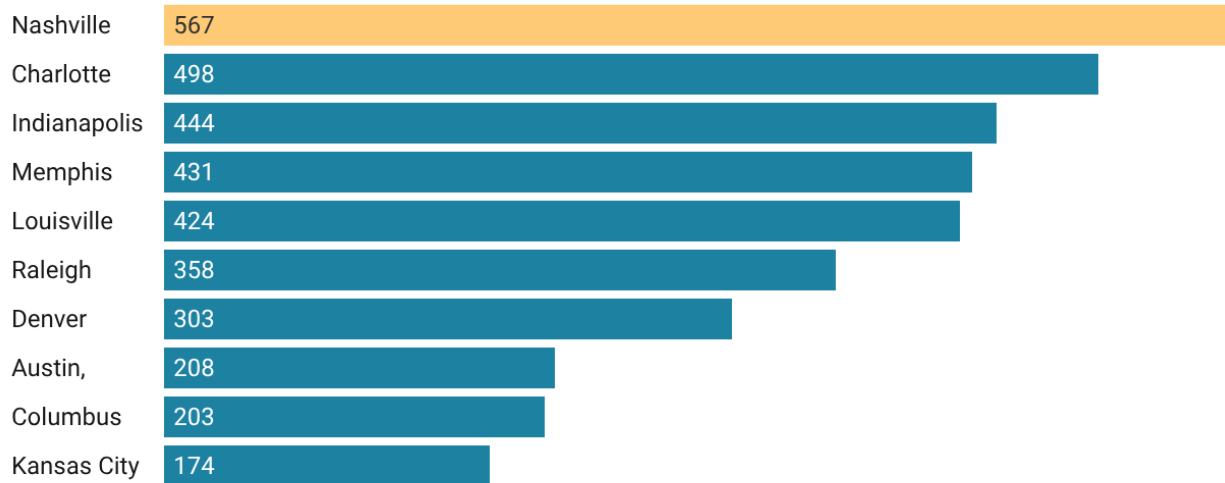
Source: Peer-city surveys • Created with Datawrapper

The cities in our sample appear to split into two groups, with Memphis, Charlotte, Nashville, and Indianapolis in the high call-for-service group, and the other peer-city police departments in the lower call-for-service group.

¹⁷ The MNPDP “Police Department Response Time” dashboard shows the emergency response time fell to 12.5 minutes in 2025. The response time for urgent calls fell from 52.4 minutes in 2024 to 45 minutes. Total response times for all calls fell from 56.8 minutes in 2024 to 45.9 minutes in 2025.

What happens when we consider the number of officers in each police department responding to calls for service? This seems like a more refined measure of police workload. Chart 18 below presents this information. By this measure, MNPD's workload appears to be the highest of any peer-city police department.

Chart 18: Total Calls for Service per Authorized Police Officer, 2024



Source: Peer-city surveys. • Created with Datawrapper

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and the Indianapolis Metro Police Department have workloads similar to MNPD's, while other peer-city police departments have much lower "calls for service" rates per sworn officer.¹⁸ **By this metric, MNPD is operating under the highest workload of any police department in its peer group.**

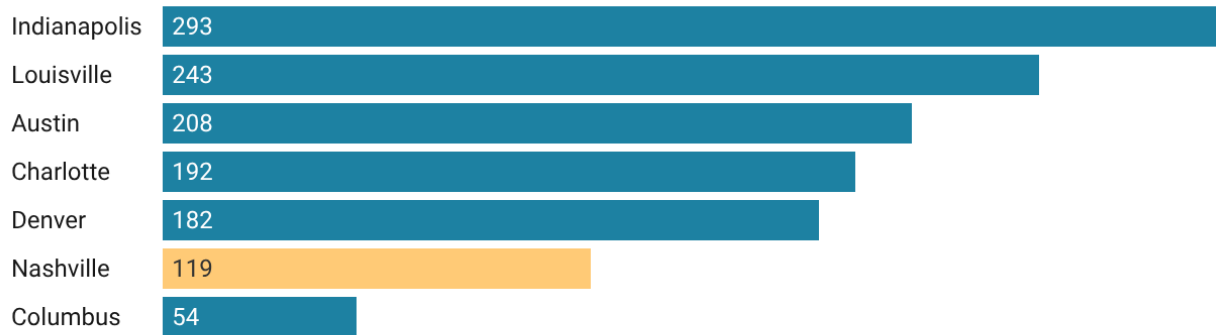
Calls Resulting in Police Dispatch

Most calls for service do not result in a police officer being dispatched. As a result, some police departments track a different measure: calls for service resulting in a police officer dispatch, which is a more precise measure of police workload. Chart 19 below presents that information for peer cities that provided this information.

¹⁸ The Memphis Police Department (MPD) appears to have a lower workload than MNPD. However, this reflects the fact that the chart above measures the workload for authorized police officer positions, not filled positions. MPD also has approximately 500 vacant officer positions, so Memphis police officers' actual workload is much higher.

Chart 19: Calls For Service Per Sworn Officer Resulting In an Officer Dispatch

Per authorized sworn officer, 2024



Source: Peer-city surveys, adopted budget books • Created with Datawrapper

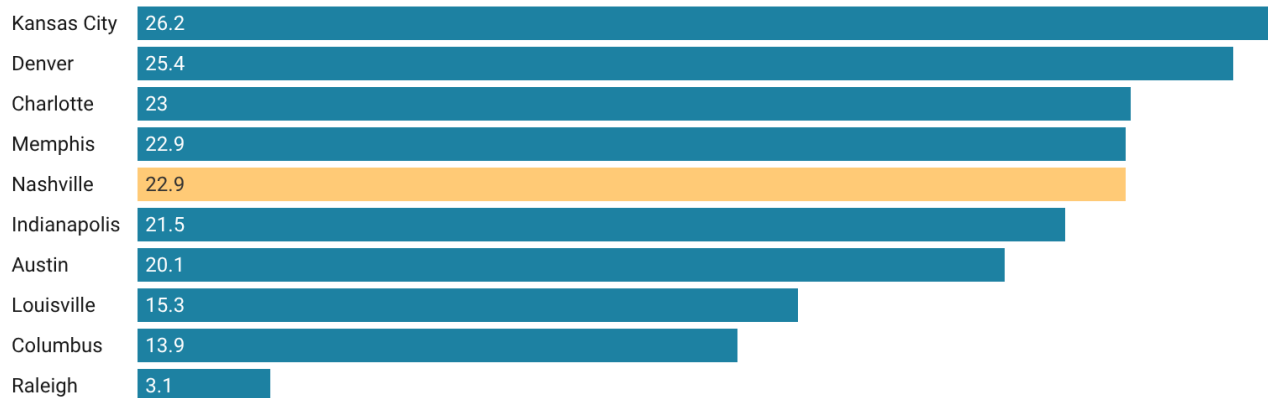
It is important to note that Chart 19 understates actual police workloads. Nashville and its peer-city police departments are all operating with significant numbers of police vacancies. As a result, workload figures based on operational numbers would be approximately 7% to 27% higher, depending on the department. Even when accounting for those vacancies, however, MNPd's patrol workload — at least as it pertains to responding to calls for service — appears to be smaller than that of many peer-city police departments.

Police Officers and Crime Rates

Another way to think about police staffing is to consider crime rates. Chart 20 below shows how many UCR Part 1 crimes (i.e., murder and non-negligent manslaughter, aggravated assaults, robberies, rape, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft) occur in Nashville and its peer cities, per sworn police officer.

The lower the figure is better in the chart below. It means that police workloads are lower and that police officers have, in theory, greater opportunities to engage in the types of policing (e.g., problem-oriented hot spot policing) that have been shown to reduce crime. In contrast, officers in cities with higher numbers are likely to have higher workloads and spend more time “running hot,” or going from call to call.

Chart 20: Total UCR Part 1 Crimes Per Authorized Police Officer, 2024



This chart shows police officer coverage — if all authorized police officer positions were filled. In reality, Nashville and peer-city police departments have significant numbers of vacancies, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

Source: Jacob Kaplan, Crime Data Tool; peer-city surveys, adopted budget books • Created with Datawrapper

By this measure, Nashville's police-to-crime staffing levels are in the middle range of peer cities. Officers in Nashville are dealing with crime levels similar to those in Charlotte and Indianapolis, but distinctly higher than in Louisville, Columbus, or Raleigh.

Is MNPD staffing too low?

Several indicators suggest that MNPD is operating with limited staffing capacity, which likely contributes to slower response rates than those of some peer-city police departments. Nashville records the highest number of total calls for service per officer, suggesting that MNPD's workload is high. At the same time, when the analysis focuses on calls for service that result in an officer dispatch, Nashville's per-officer workload (shown in Chart 19) is lower than that of most peer cities that report this statistic, which complicates the picture.

Benchmarking alone cannot answer this question. **To determine how many police officers it needs, a city must first decide what it wants police officers to do.** Working with community members to address neighborhood problems (a practice known as "problem-oriented policing"), improving clearance rates for gun cases, staffing a more robust group violence intervention, improving response times, expanding community policing. Doing more of any or all of these activities would require more police officers.

Section Three: Access to Technology

Technology plays a central role in the operations of every big city police department. Departments are increasingly using technology to enhance situational awareness, support real-time coordination during emergencies, deploy officers in response to observed patterns in calls for service and crime, collect and manage evidence, and solve crimes.

Real-time crime centers (RTCCs) serve as hubs for centralized intelligence and coordination in a growing number of big-city police departments. They aggregate information from multiple sources, including computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems associated with 911 emergency call-taking, records management systems (RMS), department-owned cameras, and video feeds from other public agencies. Many RTCCs also integrate additional technologies, such as automated license plate readers (LPRs) and video analytics (e.g., searching for a stolen vehicle), gunshot detection systems (GDS), real-time video and data-integration platforms, drones deployed for rapid situational awareness, and a variety of analytics programs.

RTCCs are typically staffed by sworn officers and civilian crime analysts, who monitor incoming information, conduct rapid analysis, and provide operational support to patrol officers, supervisors, and investigators during active incidents and emergencies.

MNPD is a highly professional police force that utilizes a wide variety of technologies.¹⁹ In recent years, the Metro Council has debated expanding these tools, including license plate readers (LPRs) and video and data-integration platforms such as Fusus. While advocates highlight the potential for these technologies to enhance public safety and provide officers with real-time situational awareness during emergencies, others on the Council and in the community have expressed significant reservations. These concerns often center on the risk of increased surveillance and the potential for federal law enforcement to access local data for purposes, such as immigration enforcement or monitoring protected activities.²⁰ Concerns about these technologies also reflect local history and perceptions of disproportionate policing of minority communities. Following a 2018 ballot referendum, voters established Metro Nashville Community Oversight (MNCO) to provide an independent review of police practices. Analyses by MNCO and other local organizations have documented patterns of racial disparity patterns, including in the LPR pilot program discussed below, that have reinforced skepticism about expanded surveillance technologies in parts of the city.²¹

This analysis focuses on five of these technologies: real-time crime centers, real-time video and data-integration platforms, automated license plate readers, gunshot detection systems, and unmanned aircraft systems. It describes each system and the research on its effectiveness, then compares how Nashville and its nine peer cities use — or do not use — these technologies.

¹⁹ Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, "Little Rock Accredited Agencies," August 9, 2025, <https://www.calea.org/news/announcements/little-rock-accredited-agencies>. MNPD is listed under "Law Enforcement Advanced Reaccreditation Excellence" with the "Tri Arc Agency" designation.

²⁰ Eli Motycka, "License Plate Readers Used to Aid Immigration Enforcement in Tennessee," *The Nashville Scene*, May 29, 2025. https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/pithinthewind/ice-uses-license-plate-readers/article_bac1e2a3-bc2a-462b-a1e0-3a263e513292.html. Cynthia Abrams, "After a year of uncertainty, Nashville's council rejects 'Fusus' police surveillance tool, WPLN, December 5, 2024. <https://wpln.org/post/after-a-year-of-uncertainty-nashvilles-council-rejects-fusus-police-surveillance-tool/>.

²¹ Steven Hale, "Calls for Community Oversight Echo Through Nashville History," *The Nashville Scene*, October 25, 2018. https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/coverstory/calls-for-community-oversight-echo-through-nashville-history/article_fb3f02cf-6101-5f39-abd9-c524142850ae.html.

Real-Time Crime Centers

According to the National Real Time Crime Center Association (NRTCCA), in 2025, more than 300 U.S. police departments operated RTCCs. Police departments cite several benefits of RTCCs, including more timely and more appropriate responses, faster investigations, enhanced officer safety, improved clearance rates, greater officer accountability, and better collaboration across departments.²²

RTCCs vary substantially from city to city, from systems that integrate large amounts of information to those with more limited capabilities. This variation makes it challenging to evaluate their impact. For example, disentangling the effect of public cameras (or CCTV) from an RTCC is difficult. A 2011 Urban Institute study found that simply installing cameras had no effect on crime, whereas actively monitored and directed cameras reduced crime in targeted areas, especially property offenses. Similarly, a 2019 systematic review found modest but meaningful overall crime reductions from CCTV, with the strongest effects in places such as parking lots and other crime hot spots.²³

Nevertheless, the limited evaluations conducted to date suggest that RTCCs can improve some investigative outcomes, such as clearance rates and times. A 2025 National Institute of Justice (NIJ) brief noted that “existing studies indicate that RTCCs can improve clearance rates and reduce crime.” It also stated that these benefits must be weighed against community concerns regarding privacy, data security, and the potential for disproportionate monitoring of select populations.²⁴

Studies of Chicago and Miami’s RTCCs found that both were associated with improvements in clearance rates (modest in Chicago, significant in Miami). In Chicago, clearance rates for violent crimes rose by 5%, and clearance rates for property crimes rose by 12%.²⁵ An evaluation of Miami found that RTCC-assisted cases had a 66% better chance of being cleared but found no significant difference in time to clearance.²⁶

Nashville opened its RTCC, the Community Safety Center, in April 2024. All of Nashville’s peer cities also operate RTCCs.

Real-Time Video and Data-Integration Platforms

In recent years, police departments operating RTCCs have begun to use real-time video and data-integration platforms to coordinate activities and enhance situational awareness.

²² Phil Malencsik, “How to Launch a Successful Real-Time Crime Center,” *Police Chief Magazine*, IACP. <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/launch-successful-real-time-crime-center/>.

²³ Nancy La Vigne, Samantha Lowry, Joshua Markman, and Allison Dwyer, “Evaluating the Use of Public Surveillance Cameras for Crime Control and Prevention,” Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, September 2011. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/evaluating-use-public-surveillance-cameras-crime-control-and-prevention>. Eric Piza, Brandon Welsh, David Farrington, and Amanda Thomas, “CCTV Surveillance for Crime Prevention: A 40-Year Systematic Review with Meta-Analysis,” *Criminology & Public Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2019, pp. 135–159. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1275&context=jj_pubs.

²⁴ “Real-Time Crime Centers: Integrating Technology to Enhance Public Safety,” Criminal Justice Technology Testing and Evaluation Center. National Institute of Justice. April 2025. <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/real-time-crime-centers-integrating-technology-enhance-public-safety>.

²⁵ Rachael Arietti, “Do real-time crime centers improve case clearance? An examination of Chicago’s strategic decision support centers,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* Volume 90, January–February 2024, 102145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2023.102145>.

²⁶ Ibid. For Miami, see Rob Guerette and Kimberly Przeszlowski, “Does the Rapid Deployment of Information to Police Improve Crime Solvability? A Quasi-Experimental Impact Evaluation of Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) Technologies on Violent Crime Incident Outcomes,” *Justice Quarterly* 40, no. 7 (2023): 950–974. DOI: 10.1080/07418825.2023.2264362. See also Kimberly Przeszlowski, “Criminologist: How real time crime centers can shorten response times, aid investigations,” Associated Press, *Police Chief Magazine*, August 19, 2024.

One of the most widely used camera-integration and video-sharing platforms is Axon Enterprise's Fusus. Other commonly used systems include video-management and surveillance suites from Genetec, Milestone Systems, and Motorola Solutions' CommandCentral and Avigilon offerings.

Vendors often describe these systems as the central integration layer of an RTCC because they unify camera networks, sensor feeds, and operational data. These platforms integrate multiple sources of information, including video from public cameras; video from businesses or residents who either register their cameras or opt in to allow live access; and, where deployed, data from gunshot-detection sensors (GDS), automated license plate readers (LPRs), drones, and body-worn cameras. Many platforms can also provide mapping capabilities, incident and evidence-management features, integration with computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems, communication functions for first responders, and analytic tools.

By connecting these data streams and linking them to a CAD system, the platforms allow dispatchers, analysts, and responding officers to view live video related to an incident, identify potentially involved individuals or vehicles, and generate investigative leads quickly. Police departments report that these capacities are particularly useful in incidents involving shootings, armed robberies, or vehicle-related crimes, though independent evaluations of these tools remain limited. One recent evaluation of the Hartford Police Department's RTCC found that the single most important factor in solving a case was whether RTCC analysts were able to locate and analyze associated video. When video was located, cases were more than four times as likely to be solved, after controlling for other case characteristics.²⁷

The adoption of these platforms in big-city police departments has become increasingly widespread. At the same time, both these platforms and component technologies — such as LPRs — can be controversial. In recent years, a number of municipalities have stopped using LPRs out of concern about potential misuse by federal law enforcement. However, the number of these withdrawals remains limited. A recent *Politico* story notes that “more than a dozen” jurisdictions have suspended LPR use, which is small in comparison to the approximately 6,000 law enforcement agencies that continue to use the technology.²⁸

Civil rights advocates say that, at a minimum, such systems require robust guardrails that limit secondary uses, set retention schedules, and maintain auditing mechanisms for access and sharing. These same advocates also typically advocate for strong transparency measures, including publishing policies, annual audits, aggregate data on camera participation, and information on where cameras, LPRs, gunshot detection systems, and other technologies are deployed. Others go further, arguing that certain surveillance capabilities pose risks that cannot be adequately addressed through policy safeguards, particularly given documented instances where oversight mechanisms have failed or been circumvented.²⁹

²⁷ “Real-Time Crime Centers: Integrating Technology to Enhance Public Safety,” Criminal Justice Technology and Evaluation Center, National Institute of Justice.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/394148162_Real-Time_Crime_Centers_Integrating_Technology_to_Enhance_Public_Safety. For Hartford, see Lisa Barao and Chris Mastroianni, “Creating Solvability With Real-Time Crime Centers (RTCCs): Impacts on Homicide and Shooting Investigations,” *Police Quarterly*, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10986111241290143>.

²⁸ Faith Wardwell, “Liberal towns backtrack on license plate trackers amid concerns about privacy — and Trump,” *Politico*, December 1, 2025. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/11/30/license-plate-trackers-pushback-00670550>.

²⁹ Khari Johnson and Mohamed Al Elew, “California police are illegally sharing license plate data with ICE and Border Patrol,” *CalMatters*, June 13, 2025, <https://calmatters.org/economy/technology/2025/06/california-police-sharing-license-plate-reader-data/>.

Automated License Plate Readers (LPRs)

Many big city police departments across the country have embraced automated license plate readers (LPRs). These cameras scan license plates on moving or parked vehicles and compare them to existing databases, such as lists of stolen cars or registered owners with outstanding warrants. Law enforcement agencies use LPRs primarily to investigate motor vehicle thefts, but the technology is also commonly used in investigations involving violent crime, kidnappings and missing persons, and in broader crime pattern analysis.

Several academic studies have sought to measure the effectiveness of LPRs, including a 2014 RAND report that found that LPR deployments help officers detect stolen vehicles more quickly and recover them at higher rates. The report also noted that agencies commonly use LPR data to analyze crime patterns and vehicle movements.³⁰

Evidence as to whether LPRs reduce crime is more mixed. An early evaluation by criminologist Cynthia Lum found operational improvements but no overall crime reductions in targeted areas. Subsequent studies found that LPRs improved police officers' ability to identify stolen vehicles but found mixed evidence as to whether LPRs deterred or reduced crime. However, both of those studies focused on small, short-term deployments.³¹ A 2019 study that examined a large-scale single-city deployment of fixed LPRs found that such deployments "may have the potential to improve investigative outcomes for some serious crimes — particularly with more consistent use and better placement for investigations." It concluded that more research is needed "to determine the best uses of LPRs, the optimal scales and methods of LPR deployment, and the full range of costs and benefits associated with LPR use."³²

In 2025, John Shjarback and James Sarkos noted that there has been relatively little high-quality research into LPRs despite their growing deployment. They summarized the literature as follows:

Research indicates LPRs provide increased efficiency in terms of generating more "alerts" for stolen plates or vehicles, which translates into arrests and automobile recoveries for such crimes being two to three times more likely during patrols when the technology is used. Thus far, however, there is little evidence that LPRs reduce crime and even less is known about their impact on solve/clearance rates.³³

However, Shjarback and Sarkos also noted that many of the previous evaluations of LPRs considered only minimal deployments or deployments in conjunction with "hot spot" policing. The use of mobile LPRs over broader areas was one potentially promising approach that has gone largely unstudied.

³⁰ Gierlack et al., "License Plate Readers for Law Enforcement: Opportunities and Obstacles," RAND Corporation, 2014. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR467.html.

³¹ A 2011 study by Cynthia Lum, Julie Hibdon, Breanne Cave, Christopher Koper, and Linda Merola found "that when small numbers of LPR patrols are used in crime hot spots in the way we have tested them here, they do not seem to generate either a general or offense-specific deterrent effect. "License plate reader (LPR) police patrols in crime hot spots: an experimental evaluation in two adjacent jurisdictions," *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 7:321–345 (DOI 10.1007/s11292-011-9133-9). However, in a later study, Koper and colleagues did find a deterrent effect. Bruce Taylor, Christopher Koper, and Daniel Woods, "Combating Vehicle Theft in Arizona: A Randomized Experiment with License Plate Recognition Technology," *Criminal Justice Review*, Volume: 37 Issue: March 2012 for the improved efficiency finding. By the same authors, see also "A randomized test of initial and residual deterrence from directed patrols and use of license plate readers at crime hot spots," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* (2013) 9:213–244. DOI 10.1007/s11292-012-9170-z.

³² Christopher Koper, Cynthia Lum, et al. "The Impacts of Large-Scale License Plate Reader Deployment on Criminal Investigations," *Police Quarterly*, February 12, 2019. Volume 22, Issue 3, <https://doi.org/10.1177/109861111982803>

³³ John Shjarback and James Sarkos, "An Evaluation of a Major Expansion in Automated License Plate Reader (LPR) Technology," *Justice Evaluation Journal*, March 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24751979.2025.2473363>.

Gunshot Detection Systems

Gunshot detection systems (GDS) rely on networks of acoustic sensors to identify sounds consistent with the acoustic signature of gunfire. When the system classifies an event as a likely gunshot, it estimates the location and number of shots fired and transmits an alert to the police department. Potential benefits include faster notification of shootings, improved situational awareness for responding officers, and additional investigative leads. For example, responding officers may recover shell casings at locations identified through GDS alerts; these can then be entered into the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to link firearms used in different crimes.

The most recent publicly available data on the adoption rate dates back to 2016, when about 16% of cities with populations over 250,000 reported using gunshot detection systems.³⁴

A multi-site evaluation commissioned by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) found that gunshot detection systems were “generally but not consistently associated with faster response times and more evidence collection and that effects on gun violence were mixed and difficult to isolate.”³⁵ A longitudinal analysis of the well-known ShotSpotter gunshot detection system across large metropolitan counties found “no significant impact on firearm-related homicides or arrest outcomes.”³⁶ Subsequent studies in Kansas City and Chicago found that while GDS systems significantly increased the number of alerts, evidence on whether this translated into improved case clearance was limited; the Chicago staggered-deployment study found significant increases in gun recoveries but no effect on fatal or non-fatal shootings.³⁷

A 2024 quasi-experimental study examining GDS deployment across Chicago police districts — which was one of the most methodologically rigorous evaluations to date — reached similar conclusions, finding no significant aggregate effects on gun violence outcomes.³⁸ The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General reported similar conclusions, finding that most alerts did not result in gun-crime evidence. Additional research documents increases in officer workload and costs associated with false positives, with limited direct impact on homicides absent broader strategies.³⁹ Chicago subsequently discontinued the use of ShotSpotter.

³⁴ “Local Police Departments, 2016: Personnel, Policies, and Practices,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016 survey.

³⁵ Daniel S. Lawrence, Nancy G. La Vigne, Paige S. Thompson, “Evaluation of Gunshot Detection Technology to Aid in the Reduction of Firearms Violence,” Urban Institute. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/254283.pdf>.

³⁶ Mitchell Doucette, Christa Green, Jennifer Necci Dineen, David Shapiro, and Kerri Raissian, Impact of ShotSpotter Technology on Firearm Homicides and Arrests Among Large Metropolitan Counties: A Longitudinal Analysis, 1999–2016,” *Journal of Urban Health*, April 3, 2021. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8566613/pdf/11524_2021_Article_515.pdf.

³⁷ Eric Piza, Rachael Arietti, Jeremy Carter, and George Mohler, “The Effect of Gunshot Detection Technology on Evidence Collection and Case Clearance in Kansas City, Missouri,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* (2023), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11292-023-09594-6>; Nathan Connealy, Eric Piza, Rachael Arietti, George Mohler, and Jeremy Carter, “Staggered Deployment of Gunshot Detection Technology in Chicago, IL: A Matched Quasi-Experiment of Gun Violence Outcomes,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-024-09617-w>. Both studies were funded by National Institute of Justice grant 2019-R2-CX-0004; the full final report is available at <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/308357.pdf>.

³⁸ Nathan Connealy, Eric L. Piza, Rachael Arietti, George Mohler, and Jeremy G. Carter, “Staggered Deployment of Gunshot Detection Technology: A Matched Quasi-Experiment of Gun Violence Outcomes,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-024-09617-w>.

³⁹ “The Chicago Police Department’s Use of ShotSpotter Technology,” City of Chicago, Office of the Inspector General, August 2021. <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Chicago-Police-Departments-Use-of-ShotSpotter-Technology.pdf>. See also Jerry Ratcliffe, “A partially randomized field experiment on the effect of an acoustic gunshot detection system on police incident reports,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. September 3, 2018. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11292-018-9339-1>.

Although evidence of crime reduction remains limited, newer evaluations suggest that GDS may improve patrol-level awareness and lead to more weapons recoveries in some situations. There may be other downstream benefits as well as suggested by an analysis by the University of Chicago Crime Lab that found suggestive evidence that Chicago's GDS may have reduced gunshot fatality rates, possibly by accelerating Fire/EMS response times, even though the shootings themselves did not decline. However, the authors cautioned that these findings were preliminary and not statistically definitive.⁴⁰

Police departments continue to weigh the costs and benefits of gunshot detection systems. Rather than considering these systems as standalone solutions, many departments now view them as one component in their broader RTCC information flows.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are integrated systems that include an unmanned aircraft (the drone), the ground-based control station used to operate it, the communication link connecting the aircraft and controller, and the associated sensors, cameras, software, and support equipment required for operation.

According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), more than 1,500 state and local public safety agencies — 70% of which were law enforcement — had acquired drones in 2020.⁴¹ That figure is almost certainly substantially higher today. Police use drones for a variety of tasks, including search-and-rescue operations, missing-person searches, tactical incident response (such as SWAT deployments), crash and crime scene reconstruction, disaster response, and the monitoring of large events.

Some jurisdictions are now piloting the use of drones as first responders, with reported cases indicating arrival times of under four minutes, faster than conventional patrol units.⁴² Proponents argue that early aerial assessment can provide real-time situational awareness, support dispatchers with triage or downgrading calls for service, and enable responding officers to better prepare for conditions at the scene.⁴³ However, rigorous evaluations of these claims are largely nonexistent. Few studies have systematically assessed whether drone deployment leads to significant reductions in crime, improved clearance rates, or long-term community safety outcomes.

⁴⁰ Henry Josephson, Javier Lopez, Jens Ludwig, and Alejandro Roemer, "Researchers: ShotSpotter Helps Gunshot Victims Receive Rapid First Aid. Does That Change the Debate?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 2024.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/2024/09/11/opinion-shot-spotter-chicago-response-to-victims/>. This analysis was reported in an op-ed and has not yet been published as a formal working paper or peer-reviewed study. The authors described their findings as "suggestive but not definitive," noting approximately a 1-in-4 chance the result reflects noise in the data rather than a true effect.

⁴¹ "Law Enforcement and Technology: Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems," Congressional Research Service, August 22, 2023. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47660>

⁴² M. Kristiansson, M. Andersson Hagiwara, L. Svensson, S. Schierbeck, A. Nord, J. Hollenberg, M. Ringh, P. Nordberg, P. Andersson Segerfelt, M. Jonsson, J. Olsson, A. Claesson, "Drones can be used to provide dispatch centers with on-site photos before arrival of EMS in time critical incidents," *Resuscitation*, Volume 202, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resuscitation.2024.110312>.

⁴³ Craig Allen, Doug Seirup, Brandon Karr, Chad Karlewicz, and Kyle Williams. All the Buzz: Drones as First Responders," *Police Chief Magazine*. <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/all-the-buzz-dfr/>.

Civil Liberties Concerns

Civil rights advocates acknowledge the advantages of using drones in certain circumstances; however, advocates, attorneys, activists, and academics have expressed concerns about a number of use cases. These concerns are wide-ranging. Persistent aerial surveillance could violate Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable searches and seizures.⁴⁴ Drones could be used to intimidate protestors exercising their First Amendment rights or be deployed disproportionately to high-crime neighborhoods.⁴⁵

LPRs are a particular source of concern. LPR networks and related surveillance tools have been used not only for criminal investigations but also in support of immigration enforcement and to monitor people involved in activities protected under the First Amendment.⁴⁶

Concerns regarding federal access to local data often center on the pathways through which such information can be shared. While federal agencies frequently obtain license plate reader (LPR) data from commercial providers, these same agencies have also accessed pathways through information-sharing agreements with local agencies and through vendor-enabled sharing. Local deployment can create access pathways unless explicitly constrained.⁴⁷

Some opponents of these technologies emphasize that without explicit, legally binding constraints, local data may be utilized by federal authorities for purposes such as immigration enforcement or the monitoring of protected activities. Others argue that local safeguards are fundamentally insufficient, citing what the sociologist Sarah Brayne has described as the use of private-sector data partnerships to access information that would otherwise require a warrant — effectively circumventing Fourth Amendment constraints through commercial arrangements.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Jay Stanley, "Autonomous Drone Patrols Start to Become a Thing," American Civil Liberties Union, October 17, 2025, <https://www.aclu.org/news/privacy-technology/drone-patrols>.

⁴⁵ Shelby Hickman and Monique Jenkins, "Chula Vista Police Department's Unmanned Aircraft System Program," CNA/COPS Office. <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/content.ashx/cops-r1170-pub.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Vasudha Talla, "Documents Reveal ICE Using Driver Location Data From Local Police for Deportations," March 13, 2019. ACLU. <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/documents-reveal-ice-using-driver-location-data>.

⁴⁷ Peter Andringa, "Trump's Immigration data dragnet," Financial Times, December 10, 2025, for a detailed discussion how ICE is using private databases, including a national network of LPRs provided by Thomson Reuters.

⁴⁸ Sarah Brayne, *Predict and Surveil: Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Summary

- **Real-time crime centers.** There is growing evidence that RTCCs can improve clearance rates and reduce crime. Adoption is now widespread among large U.S. cities, although the specific capabilities vary.
- **Real-time video and data-integration platforms.** Real-time video and data-integration platforms have become a widely used tool in major U.S. cities, including all of Nashville’s nine peer cities. Law enforcement agencies find these tools useful for improving situational awareness and generating investigative leads, and an emerging body of empirical research finds that RTCCs are associated with significant improvements in case clearance rates.⁴⁹ Evidence on whether these platforms reduce crime levels is more mixed: at least one rigorous evaluation has documented crime reductions in some offense categories, but findings across studies and crime types are not consistent.⁵⁰
- **Automated license plate readers (LPRs).** There is strong evidence that LPRs improve operational efficiency, producing significantly more alerts for stolen vehicles and wanted persons. Evidence that these alerts translate into higher recovery rates is moderate but consistent. Evidence for crime deterrence or crime reduction is mixed. Surprisingly, despite their widespread adoption, the number of academic studies evaluating LPRs is small.
- **Gunshot detection systems.** The evidence about the effectiveness of gunshot detection systems is mixed.
- **Unmanned Aircraft Systems (Drones).** First responders and law enforcement have rapidly adopted drone technology, and their usefulness in certain situations is widely acknowledged. However, the benefits of newer applications, such as drones deployed as first responders, have not been established in the academic literature.

Nashville’s Surveillance Debate

Nashville has repeatedly debated how or whether MNPd should use technologies such as automated license plate readers (LPRs) and real-time video and data-integration platforms such as Axon’s Fusus. In February 2022, the Metro Council authorized a six-month LPR pilot program, which ran from January 23 to July 22, 2023. According to MNPd, the cameras helped recover 87 vehicles valued at roughly \$1.0 million, led to 112 arrests, and resulted in 130 felony charges. Critics alleged that LPRs were concentrated in low-income, non-white areas. After analyzing the pilot program, Metro Nashville Community Oversight published a report with an analysis of the pilot program. It stated “both the locations of the LPRs and the areas with the highest concentration of LPR enforcement activity are overwhelmingly in low-income and nonwhite areas,” a finding of what MNCO described as one of several “troubling trends.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ On case clearance, see Rachael Arietti, “Do real-time crime centers improve case clearance? An examination of Chicago’s strategic decision support centers,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* (2024); Rob Guerette et al., “An Extended Impact Evaluation of Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) Technologies on Violent Crime Outcomes,” *Justice Evaluation Journal* 8, no. 2 (2025); Lisa Barao and Chris Mastroianni, “Creating Solvability With Real-Time Crime Centers (RTCCs): Impacts on Homicide and Shooting Investigations,” *Police Quarterly* (2025).

⁵⁰ On crime reduction, see John Hollywood et al., *Real-Time Crime Centers in Chicago: Evaluation of the Chicago Police Department’s Strategic Decision Support Centers* (RAND, 2019), which found crime reductions of 3% to 17% across ten crime categories, statistically significant in approximately 40% of models tested.

⁵¹ “An Analysis of MNPd’s Full License Plate Reader Pilot Program,” Metro Nashville Community Oversight. <https://www.nashville.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/MNCO-Full-LPR-Pilot-Program-Report.pdf?ct=1691418108>.

An analysis by the Metro Planning Department, read into the record by MNPDP at an April 2024 community meeting, found that LPR locations had higher shares of residents in poverty and people of color (1.5 to 1.8 times higher than areas farther from LPRs); however, they also had significantly higher concentrations of violent crime and major intersections (3.7 to 5.3 times higher).⁵² Critics continued to express concerns about LPRs, including the concern that LPR data could be obtained by federal immigration authorities.

After the pilot ended in July 2023, the LPR cameras were removed. In August 2023, the Metro Council voted 24-14 with one abstention to approve full implementation of LPRs. However, no vendor contract was subsequently brought to Council for approval.⁵³ Instead, the following year, the Mayor's Office convened county-wide community meetings on LPRs.⁵⁴ Both Mayor Freddie O'Connell and MNPDP Chief John Drake expressed support for the technology.⁵⁵ In the spring of 2025, a Council resolution was introduced that formally requested that the Mayor direct MNPDP and the purchasing agent to complete LPR procurement. But the resolution failed to advance through committee. As of early 2026, no LPR vendor contract has been brought to Council for approval. As a result, LPRs remain an unresolved issue.⁵⁶

During the same period, Nashville debated whether MNPDP should expand its use of Axon's Fusus platform, which aggregates live and recorded video feeds from city-owned and privately owned cameras that voluntarily connect to the system. MNPDP entered a \$175,000 sole-source contract with Fusus in September 2022 without Council approval.⁵⁷ Although the contract fell below the \$250,000 threshold that triggers automatic Council review, Metro Code separately requires Council approval and a public hearing for any contract involving surveillance technology. This did not take place. The technology was then used for roughly 16 months before concerns about process, privacy, and equity prompted Metro to pause its use in early 2024.⁵⁸ MNPDP and the Mayor's Office subsequently asked Council to approve a new, larger contract (\$774,900 for a total period of five years) that would explicitly authorize Fusus to integrate video feeds from participating private cameras.⁵⁹

⁵² Steven Hale, "As Nashville Embraces License Plate Readers, Critics Still Have Issues with Uses and Data," *Nashville Banner*, April 29, 2024. <https://nashvillebanner.com/2024/04/29/nashville-lpr-privacy-concerns/>

⁵³ On the August 2023 Council vote, see Eli Motyka, "Divided Council Approves Full Implementation of License Plate Readers," *Nashville Scene*, August 16, 2023, https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/pithinthewind/divided-council-approves-full-implementation-of-license-plate-readers/article_8ccb5ad6-3c68-11ee-95ec-afbc6dc05aa3.html.

⁵⁴ On the 2024 community meetings, see Steven Hale, "Nashville to Expand LPR Use Despite Privacy Concerns," *Nashville Banner*, April 29, 2024, <https://nashvillebanner.com/2024/04/29/nashville-lpr-privacy-concerns/>

⁵⁵ On Mayor O'Connell's and Chief Drake's expressions of support and the post-vote stalemate, see Brendan Tierney, "Nashville progresses towards license plate reader approval after police chief's calls to action," *WSMV4*, October 16, 2024, <https://www.wsmv.com/2024/10/16/nashville-progresses-towards-license-plate-reader-approval-after-police-chiefs-calls-action>

⁵⁶ On the spring 2025 resolution that failed to advance, see Caleb Wethington, "Resolution to push for LPRs in Nashville withdrawn at Metro Council meeting," *WSMV*, April 1, 2025, <https://www.wsmv.com/2025/04/02/resolution-push-lprs-nashville-withdrawn-metro-council-meeting/>.

⁵⁷ The original September 2022 contract is documented in Metropolitan Nashville Community Oversight, "FUSUS Informational Report," October 2023, <https://www.nashville.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/MNCO-FUSUS-Informational-Report-ADA.pdf>.

⁵⁸ On the procurement issues that prompted the February 2024 pause, see Cassandra Stephenson, "Nashville pauses use of Fusus surveillance tech after original contract skirted rules," *Nashville Tennessean*, February 6, 2024, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/davidson/2024/02/05/nashville-pauses-surveillance-tech-after-contract-skirted-rules/72484973007/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=true&gca-epti=z1139xxe1139xxv000038&gca-ft=136&gca-ds=sophi>.

⁵⁹ On the proposed \$774,900 contract extension and Council debate, see Stephen Elliott, "Metro Council Revisits Fusus Surveillance Program," *Nashville Banner*, October 14, 2024, <https://nashvillebanner.com/2024/10/14/mnpdp-fusus-contract-surveillance/>. The contract details are documented in Nashville Community Review Board, "FUSUS Informational Report Update: RS2024-792," November 2024, <https://www.nashville.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/NCRB-FUSUS-2024-Informational-Report-Update-RS2024-792-ADA.pdf>.

In advance of the Council vote, MNPDP adopted a new “Community Safety Camera System” policy. Among its provisions were prohibitions on the use of facial recognition technology on the network. It also barred the integration of private residential cameras, required audit trails and periodic audits of system access, and limited camera locations to areas with no reasonable expectation of privacy.⁶⁰

Civil-rights groups and immigrant advocates continued to oppose the proposed Fusus expansion, while the Community Review Board raised concerns in a series of informational reports.⁶¹ Critics argued that the technology would normalize surveillance and disproportionately affect Black and immigrant communities. They also feared that state or federal law enforcement might be able to access the system to enforce laws related to immigration, abortion, or gender-affirming care. They also argued that the contract’s indemnification provisions were structured in a way that would route allegations of misuse through Axon rather than Metro, making it prohibitively expensive for residents to seek legal redress for civil-rights violations. Finally, critics raised questions about whether independent oversight bodies would have meaningful access to data needed to evaluate racial bias or misuse.⁶²

After months of hearings and deferrals, in December 2024, the Metro Council narrowly rejected the expanded Fusus contract. The measure received 20 votes in favor and 18 against, with two members absent; it needed 21 votes to pass.⁶³

In March 2025, the Metro Council enacted BL2025-690 and related amendments, establishing a legal framework for any community safety camera network. The ordinance was sponsored by both supporters and opponents of the earlier Fusus contract. It codified a detailed set of guardrails: bans on facial recognition and all other artificial intelligence (AI) or machine-learning-based identification (including automated lip reading); restrictions on cameras at residential properties; a prohibition on MNPDP recording any camera not owned and operated by MNPDP; requirements that officers document in writing the purpose of each camera access; mandatory quarterly audits with a three-year audit trail; public maps of public safety cameras owned and operated by MNPDP; and a requirement that all cameras be accessed only from a designated Community Safety Center. The ordinance also included enforcement provisions — including contract termination clauses — and requirements for preserving footage of excessive or unlawful force. And it requires MNPDP to publish annual reports on donor camera usage and to report any violations to the Mayor and Council within seven days of discovery.⁶⁴

The ordinance prohibits the use of the network to target, harass, or intimidate individuals and groups based on characteristics including race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability, and imposes an affirmative duty on MNPDP employees to intervene and stop unlawful or improper use of the network and to report any such violations.

⁶⁰ MNPDP Policy, Section 12.80, “Community Safety Camera System.”

https://www.nashville.gov/sites/default/files/2024-12/Community_Safety_Camera_System.pdf.

⁶¹ On Community Review Board concerns and analyses, see Nashville Community Review Board, “FUSUS Informational Report Update: RS2024-792,” November 2024,

<https://www.nashville.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/NCRB-FUSUS-2024-Informational-Report-Update-RS2024-792-ADA.pdf>, along with the Board’s earlier reports of October 2023 and January 2024.

⁶² On indemnification concerns and barriers to legal redress for civil-rights violations, see Stephen Watts, “Will Nashville Choose FUSUS or Democracy?”, *The Contributor*, March 4, 2025, <https://thecontributor.org/will-nashville-choose-fusus-or-democracy/>.

⁶³ Stephen Elliott, “Fusus Software Program Fails to Pass Metro Council Vote,” *Nashville Banner*, December 3, 2024, <https://nashvillebanner.com/2024/12/03/metro-council-fails-fusus-software/>.

⁶⁴ Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Ordinance BL2025-690, “An Ordinance Amending Section 13.08.080 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws Pertaining to the Use of a Community Safety Camera Network,” passed on third reading March 18, 2025, signed by Mayor Freddie O’Connell March 24, 2025, <https://nashville.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7093315&GUID=B64672F3-34E5-419A-B76A-8029F2A246F8>.

The ordinance limits MNPd's access to donor cameras to two circumstances: responding to a “public health and safety emergency” — defined as any event posing a significant threat to public safety that would typically require a response by Metro emergency services — or conducting a network audit. It does not authorize routine investigative review or proactive monitoring through the network. And it requires a public hearing before any future amendment to these provisions, meaning the guardrails cannot be quietly weakened.

In short, BL2025-690 established the statutory basis on which a future Fusus or similar contract could be brought back to Council for approval. Any such contract would operate within these constraints unless the Council chose to amend the framework.

Critics continued to express concerns even after BL2025-690 was enacted. They argued that policy safeguards, while welcome, remained insufficient to address fundamental concerns: that surveillance technologies, once deployed, tend to expand; that contractual and policy protections can be eroded over time; and that the indemnification structure of the underlying Axon contract could reduce Metro’s accountability for misuse. They also expressed concern that the system would disproportionately affect Black and immigrant communities.⁶⁵

In April 2025, Mayor O’Connell’s office confirmed that the administration was no longer actively pursuing a Fusus contract, citing “what appear to be erosions in the rule of law at the federal level.”⁶⁶ But the question of how — and whether — Nashville should expand its camera surveillance infrastructure has not been resolved. In November 2025, O’Connell filed a resolution for a memorandum of understanding that would have routed \$15 million in state public safety funds through the Nashville Downtown Partnership, a nonprofit that manages Nashville’s downtown business improvement district, to purchase a range of equipment, including a real-time video and data integration platform called LeoSight.⁶⁷ After public pushback, the Metro Council voted in December 2025 to strip LeoSight and a separate AI surveillance tool from the itemized MOU and deferred the broader agreement.⁶⁸ In January 2026, after Mayor O’Connell filed separate resolutions to accept the same equipment as direct donations from NDP,

⁶⁵ On the indemnification concerns and other critiques following BL2025-690, see Steven Watts, “Will Nashville Choose FUSUS or Democracy?”, *The Contributor*, March 5, 2025, <https://thecontributor.org/will-nashville-choose-fusus-or-democracy/>.

On disproportionate-impact concerns expressed by community organizations, see Stephen Elliott and Steven Hale, “Nashville Council to Vote on Fusus Surveillance System,” *Nashville Banner*, December 2, 2024, <https://nashvillebanner.com/2024/12/02/nashville-police-surveillance-technology/>. See also Tony Garcia, “Metro Council approves ‘guardrails’ for security camera bill in Nashville,” *WSMV4*, March 4, 2025, <https://www.wsmv.com/2025/03/05/metro-council-approves-guardrails-security-camera-bill-nashville/>.

⁶⁶ On Mayor O’Connell’s April 2025 statement that the administration was no longer actively pursuing Fusus, see Steven Hale, “Metro Nashville Stalls Pursuit of Fusus Surveillance Program,” *Nashville Banner*, April 28, 2025, <https://nashvillebanner.com/2025/04/28/metro-nashville-fusus-freddie-oconnell/>.

⁶⁷ On the November 2025 MOU resolution and the LeoSight/Fivecast inclusions, see Stephen Hale, “Mayor’s Office Quietly Files Resolution to Allow Surveillance Use by Downtown Partnership,” *Nashville Banner*, December 1, 2025, <https://nashvillebanner.com/2025/12/01/nashville-downtown-partnership-fusus-tennessee-grant/>, and Nashville Community Review Board, “Downtown Public Safety Grant MOU Informational Report: RS2025-1659,” January 2026, <https://www.nashville.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/Downtown-Public-Safety-Grant-MOU-Informational-Report-RS2025-1659.pdf>.

⁶⁸ On the December 2025 Council action stripping LeoSight and Fivecast and deferring the MOU, see Patsy Montesinos, “Nashville Metro Council Defers \$15 Million Downtown Safety Funding Decision Until January,” *NewsChannel5*, December 16, 2025, <https://www.newschannel5.com/news/nashville-metro-council-defers-15-million-downtown-safety-funding-decision-until-january>.

the council rejected the proposal to replace 15 downtown cameras.⁶⁹ In short, the scope and future of networked camera surveillance in Nashville remain contested and unsettled.

Peer Cities' Access to Technology

Nashville is a distinct outlier in its use of technology compared to its nine peer cities. Nashville has a small network of public cameras, focused primarily on downtown. Nashville's CCTV is larger than that of Austin, Columbus, and Raleigh, similar in size to those of Charlotte and Kansas City, and much smaller than the CCTV networks of Denver, Louisville, and Memphis. However, Nashville's use of other more advanced technologies is sharply at odds with that of peer cities. **Among its peer cities, Nashville is the only city not using LPRs, real-time video and data-integration platforms, or gunshot detection systems,** as shown below in Table 5.

Table 5: Access to Technology

City	CCTV/Public Cameras	License Plate Readers	Camera/Video Platform	Gunshot Detection System
Austin	✓	X	✓	X
Charlotte	✓	✓	✓	X
Columbus	✓	✓	✓	✓
Denver	✓	✓	✓	✓
Indianapolis	✓	✓	✓	X
Kansas City	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louisville	✓	✓	✓	✓
Memphis	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nashville	✓	X	X	X
Raleigh	✓	✓	✓	X

Source: Peer-city surveys • Created with Datawrapper

⁶⁹ On the January 2026 camera resolution rejection, see Patsy Montesinos, "Nashville Council Rejects Downtown Surveillance Cameras in Safety Plan Vote," *NewsChannel5*, January 21, 2026, <https://www.newschannel5.com/news/metro-council-rejects-downtown-surveillance-cameras-in-split-vote-on-nashville-safety-plan>.

Nashville is not entirely alone in its decision not to use some of these technologies. Austin ended an LPR pilot in June 2025 over concerns similar to those named by critics in Nashville. Denver’s council also voted not to renew an LPR contract last summer. However, Denver has continued to use LPRs even as it solicits new bids for an LPR contract and seeks to upgrade safeguards.⁷⁰ In short, most peer cities continue to deploy these technologies.

Nashville is also at odds with an emerging national consensus that law enforcement should use technology to solve crimes. A recent report by the Center for American Progress, a left-leaning think tank that has historically advised Democratic presidential administrations, recommended that the federal government “[i]ncrease access to automated license plate readers by providing federal funds for state and local law enforcement to acquire these tools, which help catch carjackers and recover stolen vehicles.”⁷¹

Table 6 presents more detailed information on how Nashville and its peer cities utilize key technologies.

Table 6: Access to Technology, Nashville and Peer Cities

	LPRs (estimates)	Police- Operated Cameras (CCTV)	Camera- Sharing Platform?	Integrated Cameras	Gunshot Detection System
Austin	0	70	Yes	N/A	X
Charlotte	130	150-250	Yes	1,113	X
Columbus	100	<50	Yes	522	✓
Denver	111	2,000 - 4,000	Yes	1,000-2,000	✓
Indianapolis	320	250-500	Yes	>250	X
Kansas City	>500	50-150	Yes	>5,000	✓
Louisville	221	>2,000	Yes	1,402	✓
Memphis	>400	>2,000	Yes	2,129	✓
Nashville	0	150-250	No	0	X
Raleigh	39	<50	Yes	1,538	X

LPR estimates are based on press accounts. (Peer-city questionnaires responses confirm LPR use but provide less precise estimates.)

Source: Peer-city questionnaire responses, press accounts • Created with Datawrapper

⁷⁰ Alex Burness, "Denver Considers Kicking Out Flock — but Still Using License Plate Cameras." The Denver Post, February 16, 2026. <https://www.denverpost.com/2026/02/16/denver-flock-cameras-license-plates-other-bidders/>.

⁷¹ See "Delivering Accountability: A Plan to Stop Crime in Our Communities" The Center for American Progress, January 29, 2026. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/delivering-accountability-a-plan-to-stop-crime-in-our-communities/>

It reveals that many peer cities have made significant investments in technologies such as LPRs and real-time video and data-integration platforms that Nashville is not using at all.

As noted above, Nashville is an outlier in not using certain technologies. With other technologies, however, such as the use of unmanned aircraft systems and drones, Nashville is in the mainstream. Table 7 (below) describes how Nashville and peer-city police departments are using these systems.

Table 7: Uses of Unmanned Aircraft Systems/Drones

	Collision Mapping	Search & Rescue	SWAT	Drones as First Responders	Event Safety	Evidence/Documentation
Charlotte		✓	✓			✓
Columbus		✓			✓	✓
Denver		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Indianapolis		✓	✓		✓	✓
Kansas City	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louisville		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Memphis		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nashville		✓	✓		✓	✓
Raleigh	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

APD did not answer this section of the peer-city survey.

Source: Peer-city survey responses. • Created with Datawrapper

Many peer-city police departments have begun to pilot “drones as first responders” programs. In Louisville, for instance, Louisville Metro Emergency Services is placing Skydio drones on the roofs of eight fire stations across the city, starting later this year.⁷²

Nashville’s use of CCTV cameras and its use of UAS/drones closely track peer-city police departments. In other ways, however, Nashville diverges from peer cities. The most notable points of departure include the following:

1. **Most peer cities have robust LPR networks.** Nashville has no LPRs. And, until it discontinued the program, Austin had 40 fixed LPRs and 500 mobile LPRs. Denver, which shares many of Austin’s and Nashville’s concerns, has continued to utilize its LPRs while attempting to develop new policies to govern its use.

⁷² Marina Johnson, “One of the first of its kind: Louisville introduces new drone program for first responders,” *Louisville Courier Journal*, July 8, 2025.

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2025/07/08/louisville-introduces-new-drone-program-for-first-responders/84504912007/>.

2. **All of Nashville's peer cities are using real-time video and data-integration platforms.** Charlotte, Columbus, Louisville, Memphis, and Raleigh use Fusus. Austin continues to use the HAL/Hitachi Visualization platform to integrate information from its HALO camera network with internal police systems. Indianapolis's B-Link camera network provides live access to integrated business and residential cameras using Motorola's CommandCentral platform. Access to integrated cameras makes the number of cameras accessible to MNPd even smaller relative to peer cities.
3. **Many cities use gunshot detection systems.** Five of Nashville's nine peer cities use gunshot detection systems. One peer city — Indianapolis — has entered into contracts that create the possibility for adding acoustic sensors and integrating them into platforms.

Tradeoffs

Nashville's policy choice reflects concerns about civil liberties risks associated with LPR technologies. Civil liberties advocates argue that the presence of surveillance infrastructure may deter and suppress First Amendment activity. The recent decision by Austin to suspend its LPR program, and Denver's decision to pause the procurement process while developing new safeguards, reflect genuine concerns that federal law enforcement will access and abuse these technologies.

Critics of these technologies point out that these risks are not hypothetical. Denver's experience — in which LPR data was accessed more than 1,400 times by law enforcement agencies nationwide for immigration-related purposes before the city discovered and disabled the national lookup function — illustrates how safeguards can fail.⁷³ Nashville's caution reflects a judgment that these risks are substantial in the current federal enforcement environment.

But foregoing these technologies also imposes real costs. Some technologies, such as gunshot detection systems, appear to have a mixed record of effectiveness. Other technologies, such as LPRS, seem to have a broader evidence base and appear to match up well with Nashville's current crime challenges. For instance, motor vehicle theft has risen sharply in Nashville and some of these stolen cars were subsequently used to commit violent crimes.⁷⁴ LPRs have been shown to increase the recovery of stolen vehicles and raise clearance rates.

The decision not to deploy a real-time video and data-integration platform also has real consequences. In some instances, MNPd officers responding to a critical incident will not have access to integrated private cameras in the same way police departments in many peer cities do. This may reduce their situational awareness, potentially putting first responders and the public at greater risk.

Not using real-time video and data-integration platforms could also create significant operational burdens. Sworn officers must be diverted to perform manual evidence collection tasks that modern platforms have largely automated, which effectively reduces MNPd's officer capacity.

⁷³ Delilah Bruumer "Frequent Immigration-Related Searches of Denver Flock Camera Data Revealed in Logs," *Colorado Newsline*, August 6, 2025. <https://coloradonewslines.com/2025/08/06/immigration-denver-flock-camera/>.

⁷⁴ Chief John Drake's July 14, 2025 announcement.

<https://www.nashville.gov/departments/police/news/chief-drake-announces-creation-public-interactive-stolen-gun-data-dashb>oard. Brendan Tierny, "Nashville crime drops 20% in 2026 as sexual assault reports rise," *WSMV 4*, <https://www.wsmv.com/2026/04/03/nashville-crime-drops-20-2026-sexual-assault-reports-rise/>.

Nashville's decision not to use LPRs or a real-time video and data-integration platform puts it at odds with the practices of most big-city police departments, and even with many smaller jurisdictions in the surrounding area. Most adjacent jurisdictions now use LPRs; several operate countywide or citywide camera integration programs. Nashville's lack of access to these tools creates a blind spot in the center of the region, impacting the ability of law enforcement to monitor and interdict "corridor crime," such as the distribution of fentanyl through the regional interstate system.

Nashville's debate over policing technology reflects genuine tensions between competing values. Advocates for civil liberties point to documented cases of surveillance technology misuse and argue that the risks of these technologies outweigh their benefits. Alternatively, advocates for expanded technology use point to evidence that tools such as LPRs can improve vehicle recovery rates and generate investigative leads and that RTCCs and video and data sharing platforms provide real benefits to public safety.

This creates difficult trade-offs. Choosing not to deploy certain technologies will most likely result in fewer solved cases, particularly for vehicle-related crime. Choosing not to deploy certain technologies could also pose risks to first responders and to the public in emergency situations. At the same time, deploying technologies without robust safeguards and community trust can undermine the legitimacy that effective policing requires.

Different cities will make different tradeoffs. However, **a review of peer cities' use of technology finds that Nashville is an outlier as the only city not to be using LPRs, real-time video and integration platforms, or gunshot detection systems.**

Section Four: Compensation & Officer Care

The ability to recruit, retain, and support police officers and other first responders is an essential part of keeping Nashville safe. How does Nashville compare to peer cities in terms of how it compensates and supports police officers? This report relies on two sources to answer this question. The first source is a set of results from a survey of police salaries conducted by Metro Human Resources (Metro HR; see Appendix C for additional details.) The second is the peer-city police department questionnaire, which was completed by Nashville and six peer cities.

Nashville and most of its peer cities structure police salaries around what is known as a “step system.” In this system, officers (and other city employees) typically take a “step” every year that increases their pay. Steps are one of the primary ways that employees can see salaries increase. For fiscal year 2026, for example, Metro Nashville employees, including police officers, also received a 2% across the board pay increase, merit pay increases, and a restructured pay plan that provided 4% to 10% pay increases for most Metro employees.

MNPD patrol officers (PO2) start at step 1 at \$74,464. Starting salaries are higher for officers with additional education, at \$76,697.92 with an associate’s degree and \$78,931.84 for those with a bachelor’s degree. Over the course of their career, they can move up to Step 15, which pays \$98,253 (or \$104,148.18 for officers with bachelor’s degrees). Sergeants and lieutenants also operate within a step system. In contrast, commanders and higher ranks have minimum, middle, and maximum pay ranges.

Denver and Raleigh have somewhat different systems. Denver has what HR professionals call a “single structure” system. Instead of a published schedule of steps, with a salary for every step, Denver has four grades of pay. Raleigh has aspects of what is known as “open range” payment. This is the most flexible compensation structure. It provides minimum and maximum salaries but no published steps. Supervisors typically have more leeway to promote officers using this approach.

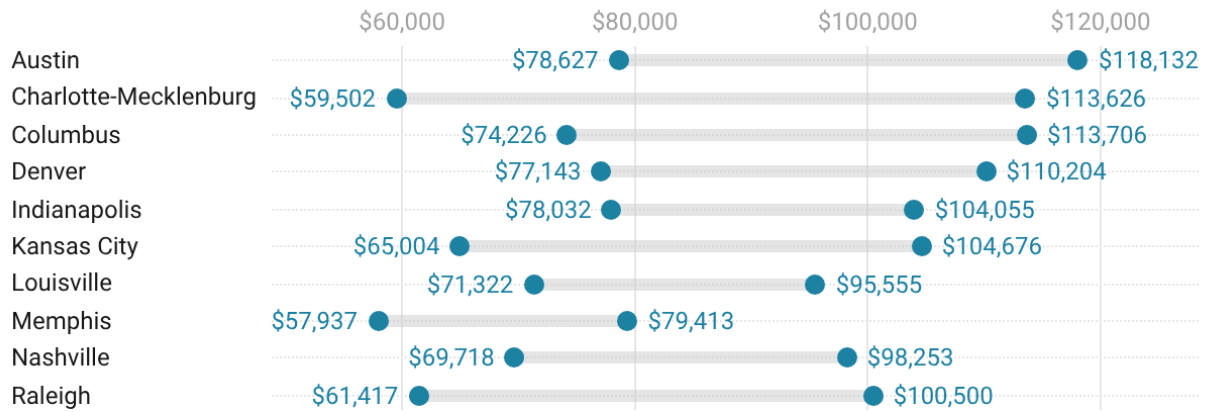
Salaries

After graduating from the academy, MNPD officers spend six months working under the supervision of a field officer. During that period, they earn the equivalent of \$69,718.00/year (or \$71,810 with an associate’s degree and \$73,901 with a bachelor’s degree). Then, after six months, they move to PO2 status and begin earning \$74,464 (\$76,697.92 with an associate’s degree or \$78,931.84 with a bachelor’s degree).

How do salaries compare under these different systems? Chart 21 below shows MNPD starting salaries — the salaries officers receive immediately after graduating — for Nashville and its peer cities.

Chart 21: Patrol Officer Base Pay Bands, Nashville and Peer Cities

Salaries for patrol officers



Note: Some departments pay officers less during an initial probation period. MNPD is one of those departments. After six months, MNPD patrol officers' base salaries rise to \$74,464. The Raleigh Police Department's top salary is for senior patrol officers.

Source: Metro Nashville HR survey, peer city publications. • Created with Datawrapper

MNPD officers' starting pay is lower than the starting pay of officers in most peer-city police departments, as shown above.

Memphis, Kansas City, Raleigh, and Charlotte are lower, but most of these cities have lower costs of living. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's somewhat surprisingly low starting salary is partially offset by a \$7,500 hiring bonus and by generous educational incentives (a 5% pay bump for an associate's degree, a 10% pay bump for a bachelor's degree), and a military service incentive (a 5% increase for officers with qualifying experience).

MNPD's top level of base pay for patrol officers also tops out at a lower rate than most peer-city police departments listed above. Only Memphis and Louisville offer lower salaries at the top of their "step" than Nashville.

Rate of Pay Increases

Starting salaries and top salaries are important data points. However, it is also important to understand how quickly base pay increases for patrol officers. In other words, how many "steps" are there in each plan? How much do "steps" increase pay?

Different city step plans deliver pay increases at very different rates. Austin, for example, provides large early-step increases, with a 12% raise from step one to step two and another 10% increase from step two to step three. Subsequent steps provide no increase. Across the full 24-step progression, the plan produces an average annualized increase of roughly 2%, but in practice, the increases are highly uneven. Some officers receive substantial raises in a given year, while others receive none.

These structural differences make direct salary comparisons across step plans difficult. Even so, several peer cities move patrol officers to higher base pay much more quickly than Nashville. Columbus's step plan increases base pay rapidly, reaching \$98,446.03 within three to four years. By comparison, MNPD patrol officers earn \$79,022 at step four, or \$83,763.32 with a bachelor's degree. Indianapolis's step structure similarly pushes base pay above \$100,000 within four years.

Denver uses a grade ladder, rather than a traditional step plan, moving patrol officers through grades from Recruit to 1st Grade. This structure also accelerates time to top-of-scale pay. After four years, a Denver patrol officer can earn a base salary of \$110,204. An MNPd patrol officer with a college degree reaches \$104,148.18 only after 15 steps.

It is important to note the limitations of this analysis. Salaries are the most important part of compensation, but not the only part. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, benefits account for approximately 38.5% of total compensation costs for state and local government employees, underscoring that salary comparisons capture only a portion of the value cities offer to police officers.⁷⁵

Historically, Metro's non-salary compensation has been more generous than that of many peer cities. Last year, Metro HR shared analysis from Mercer Consulting with the Civil Service Commission. The Mercer Consulting analysis showed that Metro retirement, retirement medical, and dental benefits were above both the private market plans and the plans of comparable cities. Education incentive benefits were also more generous than for most peers. Vision, life insurance, and short-term disability were similar to the benefits offered by peers, but life insurance, short-term disability were generally lower than private sector comparables. Long-term disability benefits were lower than peer cities and private sector comparables.

In addition, this section focuses on a very narrow subset of police compensation: patrol officer salaries. It does not compare step schedules for sergeants and lieutenants, or for higher-ranking commanders, across peer-city departments. The focus on patrol officers reflects their unique importance. Patrol officers make up the single largest share of most police departments. Moreover, cities across the country are struggling to fill these positions.

⁷⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employer Costs for Employee Compensation — June 2025," USDL-25-1358, September 12, 2025. See Table 3, "Employer Cost for Employee Compensation for State and Local Government Workers." <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.nr0.htm>

Other Components of Compensation

A variety of incentives can significantly increase pay. For MNPDP officers, an associate's degree adds a 3% pay increase and a bachelor's degree adds 6%. Overtime added another \$7,405.93 to average PO2 salaries in 2018 (the most recent year for which public data was published). Today, that figure is most likely higher. Officers can earn up to 30 days of paid family leave and a robust pension. After five years, they begin earning longevity bonuses that start at \$110 and grow over time to \$935.⁷⁶

Peer-city police departments offer similar incentives, as shown below in Table 8.

Table 8: Police Officer Incentives, Nashville and Select Peer Cities

	Austin	Columbus	Denver	Indianapolis	Kansas City	Louisville	Memphis	Nashville	Raleigh
Signing/Referral Bonus			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Lateral/accelerated processing		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Tuition/education incentives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Residency/housing incentives		✓							
Take home car			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Flex/Compressed Shift			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Childcare/support	✓								
Specialty/Career Development	✓		✓			✓		✓	
Special assignment pay/language	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	

CPD field training officers receive extra pay for every recruit they coach. The chart above logs this as "special assignment pay." CMPD is not included because it provided only a partial response to this section of the survey.

Source: Peer-city surveys • Created with Datawrapper

Officer Well-Being

Police officers experience more workplace injuries and higher rates of psychological trauma than people in most professions. An April 2020 report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that police officers were fatally injured at a rate of 13.7 per 100,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers in 2018, nearly four times the average fatality rate of 3.5 per 100,000 FTEs. Transportation incidents and violence were the leading causes of officer deaths. Police officers experienced violent but non-fatal workforce injuries at a rate of 121.7 per 10,000 FTE workers — roughly 17 times the national average of 7.3. The overall injury rate for police officers appears to be about three times higher than the national average.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ "Join MNPDP," <https://joinmnpdp.com/salary-benefits/>. Accessed November 16, 2025.

⁷⁷ "Fact Sheet | Police Officers 2018 | April 2020," Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/iif/factsheets/fatal-occupational-injuries-police-2018.htm>. Non-fatal Injuries To Law Enforcement Officers. <https://www.policinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Non-fatal-Injuries-to-LEOs-Research-Summary-2018.pdf>.

Police officers also appear to suffer from higher levels of stress than the public at large, which in turn causes mental and physical health issues. A 2020 study of 434 police officers found that 12% had a lifetime mental health diagnosis, and 26% reported current symptoms of mental illness.⁷⁸ A large body of research has also shown that police officers experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at a higher rate than the public, although estimates of the extent of PTSD in police officers vary widely. One review of the literature suggested that the estimate that 9% of police officers experienced PTSD reflected the median rate of incidence across studies.⁷⁹ Police officers also appear to have a suicide rate higher than the public at large, a risk that seems to increase with cumulative exposure to stress and traumatic events.⁸⁰

PTSD is not the only psychological threat to police officers. Officers also experience high levels of psychological stress. One widely cited meta-analysis found that at any given time, approximately 14% police officers exhibit PTSD symptoms, a rate higher than that of the general population. Officers also experience higher rates of sleep disorders, higher rates of cardiovascular disease, and higher rates of other chronic conditions.⁸¹

Fortunately, research has identified several interventions that can help address these conditions. These include peer support teams, confidential counseling and employee-assistance programs, routine wellness checks, early-intervention systems, improvements to shift scheduling, access to fitness and health programs, and sleep-health programs.

Table 9 (below) compares Nashville to peer cities in this regard.

Table 9: Health and Wellness Programs

	Confidential Counseling	Peer Support	Embedded Clinicians	Critical Incident Counseling	Employee Assistance Programs	Fitness/Wellness Incentives	Sleep Support	Chaplaincy
Austin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Columbus	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Denver	✓	✓		✓		✓		
Indianapolis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kansas City	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Louisville		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Memphis	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Nashville	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Raleigh	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

CMPD did not complete this section of the questionnaire.

Source: Peer-city surveys • Created with Datawrapper

⁷⁸ Katelyn Jetelina, Rebecca Molsberry, Jennifer Reingle Gonzalez, "Prevalence of Mental Illness and Mental Health Care Use Among Police Officers," *JAMA Network Open*, 2020;3(10): doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.19658.

⁷⁹ Shannon L. Wagner, Nicole White, Trina Fyfe, Lynda Matthews, Christine Randall, Cheryl Regehr, Marc White, Lynn E. Alden, Nicholas Buys, Mary Carey, Wayne Corneil, Alex Fraess-Phillips, Elyssa Krutop, "Systematic review of posttraumatic stress disorder in police officers following routine work-related critical incident exposure," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajim.23120>.

⁸⁰ Tina Craddock, Grace Telesco. "Police Stress and Deleterious Outcomes: Efforts Towards Improving Police Mental Health." *Journal of Police & Criminal Psychology*. 2022;37(1):173-182. doi: 10.1007/s11896-021-09488-1. Epub 2021 Nov 9. PMID: 34776601; PMCID: PMC8575544.

⁸¹ Shabeer Syed, Rachel Ashwick, Marco Schlosser, Rebecca Jones, Sarah Rowe, and Jo Billings, "Global prevalence and risk factors for mental health problems in police personnel: a systematic review and meta-analysis," <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32439827/>

Nashville compares well to peer cities. However, given the high levels of stress, trauma, and mental and physical health needs, it is difficult to say whether these supports meet actual levels of need.

Summary

This section has focused on a very narrow subset of police compensation: patrol officer salaries. As noted above, it does not examine step schedules for sergeants and lieutenants or for higher-ranking commanders across peer-city departments. The focus on patrol officers reflects their unique importance as they make up the single largest share of most police departments. Moreover, cities across the country are struggling to fill these positions.

MNPD's starting salary is lower than peer cities' starting salaries, and also offers patrol officers slower pay raises than some peer-city police departments. Columbus, Denver, and Indianapolis raise patrol officer base salaries much faster than MNPD. Base MNPD patrol salaries also top out at a lower rate than in many peer cities.

Salaries make up only a portion of overall compensation. They do not reflect overtime or incentives or enhanced payments for more difficult shifts or longevity pay, to name just a few potential income boosters. Nor do they capture the substantial value of often generous benefit packages. Nashville appears to have many of the additional pay and recruiting incentives offered by peer-city police departments.

MNPD has one of the lowest vacancy rates of any police department in its peer group. This suggests that while Nashville's pay may not be as competitive as some other cities, MNPD is a well-regarded department in an attractive city with competitive benefits. However, a 7-9% vacancy is still a significant shortfall. Filling those positions would significantly enhance public safety in Nashville.

Section Five: Policy Implications and Conclusion

This white paper presents information on crime, policing, and public safety in Nashville and nine peer cities. This final section synthesizes key findings and considers their policy implications.

Where Nashville Stands

Nashville made significant progress in improving public safety in 2025. Preliminary MNPd data show that homicides fell by approximately 34% from 2024 to 2025, a larger decline than in most peer cities. Nashville's homicide rate, which had been above the peer-city average for much of the past decade, fell to approximately 9 per 100,000 residents; a substantial improvement that narrows, though does not close, the gap with the peer-city average.

The gains extended beyond homicide. Overall, violent crime fell by approximately 14%. Property crime declined by approximately 12%, returning to roughly pre-pandemic levels. These are encouraging trends.

But the picture is not uniformly positive. Aggravated assault rates, though down approximately 13% from 2024, remain roughly 12% higher than in 2019 before the pandemic-era crime spike. Motor vehicle theft, despite falling 19% in 2025, remains 46% above pre-pandemic levels. And **Nashville's overall rate of serious violent crime and serious property crime remains in the upper tier of the peer group.** Official FBI UCR data for 2024 show that Nashville's violent crime rate was the third highest among the cohort behind only Memphis and Kansas City. Nashville's total Part 1 crime rate — which includes both violent and property offenses — was the fourth highest among the ten peer cities.

The trend in interpersonal violence involving firearms is a particular concern. NIBRS data show that between 2019 and 2024, aggravated assaults involving handguns rose by 52%, even as robberies involving handguns fell by 45%. These two firearm trends do not cancel each other out. Most fatal shootings begin as aggravated assaults: the distinction between a fatal and nonfatal outcome often turns on weapon caliber, wound location, and chance. A rise in firearm-involved aggravated assault could lead to higher homicide rates over time. These incidents also tend to concentrate in the neighborhoods and social networks most affected by gun violence. In contrast, firearm-involved robbery, which is more often driven by instrumental motives (i.e., taking another person's property), is more geographically dispersed. The decline in robberies represents real progress, while the increase in assaults represents a sustained risk that this progress could reverse.

What the Comparative Data Suggest

Nashville is the only peer city that does not use automated license plate readers (LPRs), a real-time video and data-integration platform, or a gunshot detection system (GDS). No other city in the peer group lacks all three.

This is not a minor operational detail. Section Three documents that real-time crime centers and real-time video-integration platforms are associated with improved clearance rates in the cities that have been studied, and that automated license plate readers substantially increase the rate at which stolen vehicles are recovered. In Hartford, whether analysts could locate and review associated video was the single most important factor in whether a case was solved — cases with video were more than four times as likely to

be cleared.⁸² These tools extend the investigative reach of existing personnel — streamlining access to video evidence, improving coordination during active incidents, and generating leads that would otherwise require officers to spend hours canvassing for camera footage on foot.

Nashville's Community Safety Center opened in 2024, but without a real-time video and data-integration platform or LPRs, it operates with a significantly narrower set of tools than the RTCCs in every peer city. The practical consequence is that MNPDP officers and investigators must spend time physically gathering evidence that officers in peer cities can access through integrated platforms.

Nashville's geographic size exacerbates these challenges. Nashville-Davidson County encompasses more than 500 square miles, by far the largest service area in the peer group. MNPDP has fewer officers per square mile than any peer-city police department. The combination of a large geographic footprint and the absence of technology tools that extend officers' reach creates a compounding disadvantage. Peer-city departments operating in smaller service areas, with higher officer density and access to these technologies, have a significant operational advantage over MNPDP.

The civil liberties concerns that have shaped Nashville's approach are also real. This paper has documented them in detail: surveillance infrastructure can expand beyond its original purpose and data retention creates long-term privacy risks. Denver's experience — in which the city's Flock camera data was searched more than 1,400 times for immigration-related purposes by law enforcement agencies nationwide before Denver disabled the national lookup function in April 2025 — illustrates how data-sharing defaults can create access pathways that go beyond a technology's intended use. These are not hypothetical risks, and Nashville's caution reflects a legitimate judgment about them.⁸³

Nashville has taken significant steps to address these concerns. In March 2025, the Metro Council enacted BL2025-690 and related amendments, establishing a legal framework for any community safety camera network. The ordinance, co-sponsored by both supporters and opponents of the earlier Fusus contract, codified substantial guardrails: bans on facial recognition and all other AI- or machine-learning-based identification; a prohibition on recording donor camera feeds; tight restrictions on access to donor cameras at residential properties, including a ban on live access to donor cameras on solely residential property; required written documentation for each camera access; required audits of the community safety camera network at least quarterly; a three-year audit trail of donor camera access; and public maps of MNPDP-owned cameras. The ordinance limits MNPDP's access to donor cameras to responding to public health and safety emergencies or conducting network audits — a more restrictive framework than what most peer cities operate — and requires a public hearing before any future amendment to these provisions. It also included enforcement provisions and requirements for preserving footage of excessive or unlawful force and providing it to both the MNPDP Office of Professional Accountability and the District Attorney's Office. BL2025-690 established the statutory basis on which a future surveillance technology contract could be brought back to Council for approval.

BL2025-690's framework appears to be more restrictive than the internal police department policies under which most peer cities currently use these technologies. The ordinance itself provides strong guidelines, and the fact that these guidelines are laws, not department policies, means that changes

⁸² Lisa Barao and Chirs Mastroianni, "Creating Solvability With Real-Time Crime Centers (RTCCs): Impacts on Homicide and Shooting Investigations." *Homicide Studies*, 2024. This finding is based on a sample of 243 firearm-assault cases pre-screened to exclude cases with characteristics that would prevent solvability. The study was conducted in partnership with Hartford's RTCC supervisor.

⁸³ Delilah Brummer, "Frequent immigration-related searches of Denver Flock camera data revealed in logs," *Colorado Newsline*, August 6, 2025. <https://coloradonewslne.com/2025/08/06/immigration-denver-flock-camera/>

must be made transparently, by a majority of Nashville’s elected council members. Nashville’s ordinance limits access to donor cameras to public health and safety emergencies and network audits, a narrow set of authorized uses. Whether the current framework strikes the right balance between those safeguards and the operational benefits described in this paper is a question the city may wish to revisit.

This decision also has implications for staffing. If Nashville continues to forgo these technologies, the comparative data suggest it will need to compensate with additional officers or accept that MNPDP officers will be less productive and less capable in certain situations than officers in peer cities.

Staffing decisions should be informed by a workload analysis.

Nashville has a comparatively high number of police officers per capita and also spends more on policing per capita than most peer cities, suggesting that MNPDP is relatively well-resourced on these measures. But Nashville’s geographic size means that officers are spread thinner than in any peer-city department. MNPDP also receives more calls for service per officer than most peer-city departments, and as noted above, Nashville has a higher rate of serious felony crime than many of its peers.

A large body of research suggests that increasing police staffing or presence generally leads to measurable reductions in crime, particularly violent crime. However, determining the appropriate number of officers Nashville needs cannot be determined by benchmarking alone. The answer depends on what Nashville wants MNPDP to do. Engaging in more community policing, improving response times, expanding problem-oriented policing, and staffing a more robust violence-reduction initiative would each require additional officers. Additional officers would also be needed to offset the absence of technology tools that extend officers’ reach in peer cities. A workload-based staffing and deployment analysis — one that begins by clarifying priorities and service expectations — would give policymakers the information they need to make informed decisions about the size and deployment of the force.

Compensation requires a total-compensation lens.

Section Four documents that MNPDP’s starting salary is competitive with peer cities. However, MNPDP offers patrol officers slower pay increases than some peer departments — Columbus, Denver, and Indianapolis raise base salaries significantly faster — and MNPDP patrol salaries cap out at a lower rate than in many peer cities.

At the same time, MNPDP has one of the lowest officer vacancy rates (9%) among peer-city police departments. This is noteworthy. It suggests that MNPDP’s total compensation package — including benefits, health insurance, and retirement — is competitive enough to attract and retain officers, even where base pay lags. Analysis shared by Metro Human Resources from Mercer Consulting supports this interpretation: Metro’s retirement, retirement medical, and dental benefits were found to be above both private-market and peer-city levels.

Before making base salary the primary policy lever for recruitment and retention, Nashville should complete a rigorous total-compensation analysis that compares the full value of what MNPDP officers receive — salary, overtime, incentives, benefits, and retirement — against peer-city departments. The vacancy data suggest the overall package is working for recruitment. The slower pay progression is a potential retention risk that warrants monitoring, but the right diagnostic tool involves a comprehensive total-compensation study, not an assumption that base pay is the key constraint. A 9% vacancy rate still represents a significant staffing shortfall, approximately 160 officers, and filling those positions would meaningfully enhance public safety in Nashville.

Effective violence reduction requires integrating policing and community-based strategies.

This paper has focused on police departments budgets, staffing, technology, and compensation. The police play a critical role in public safety, and this paper has examined whether MNPDP is positioned to play that role effectively relative to peer cities.

But policing is not the only tool available to reduce violence, and a growing body of evidence supports the conclusion that the most effective approaches integrate strategic policing with community-based prevention and intervention. The most successful cities do both.

The evidence for this is substantial. A meta-review of more than 1,400 studies examining 30 violence-reduction strategies found that focused deterrence — an approach that combines law enforcement, community engagement, and social services directed at the highest-risk individuals — produced the strongest effects on violence of any strategy reviewed. The same review found that comprehensive citywide violence-reduction efforts tend to succeed when a focused deterrence strategy is in place and functioning effectively, and fail when one is not.⁸⁴ Separately, research by the sociologist Patrick Sharkey and colleagues found that the presence of community-based organizations focused on crime and community life is associated with meaningful reductions in violence. Their research estimated a 9% year-over-year reduction in the murder rate for every 10 additional such organizations per 100,000 residents.⁸⁵

These findings point in the same direction: violence reduction works best when it focuses on the people and places at highest risk and combines enforcement with prevention and community engagement. Broad prevention strategies — such as youth mentoring, workforce development, early childhood intervention — play an important long-term role. However, a systematic review of randomized controlled trials of youth violence interventions found that targeted interventions directed at those at greatest risk consistently outperformed universal approaches.

Primary prevention strategies that address the root causes of violence are valuable investments in a city's future. They are not, however, substitutes for focused, intensive engagement with the people who face the greatest risk of gun violence. Examples of this approach include community violence intervention programs, group violence reduction strategies, and hospital-based violence intervention initiatives, which pair outreach workers, credible messengers, and service providers with a precise focus on the small number of people at highest risk. Metro Nashville is supporting this kind of work in numerous ways. Metro Public Health now employs street outreach workers. Additionally, Metro Public Health, the Urban League, and MNPDP are supporting a group violence intervention initiative that focuses on some of Nashville's most at-risk individuals. These efforts warrant both sustained investment and rigorous evaluation.⁸⁶

During Mayor O'Connell's term in office, Nashville has taken additional steps to enhance this capacity. In November 2024, the Mayor's Office launched Metro's first Office of Youth Safety. The Metro Public Health Department and the Mayor's Office also assembled a 29-member task force to develop a community

⁸⁴ Thomas Abt and Christopher Winship, "What Works in Reducing Community Violence: A Meta-Review and Field Study for the Northern Triangle," USAID, 2016.

⁸⁵ Patrick Sharkey, Gerard Torrats-Espinosa, and Delaram Takyar, "Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime," *American Sociological Review* 82, no. 6 (2017): 1214–1240.

⁸⁶ Mary Ann Limbos et al., "Effectiveness of Interventions to Prevent Youth Violence: A Systematic Review," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 33, no. 1 (2007): 65–74. The review found that tertiary interventions (directed at the highest-risk populations) were effective in all trials reviewed, while primary/universal interventions were effective in one-third of trials — a finding consistent with the broader evidence that targeted approaches outperform universal ones for near-term violence reduction.

safety plan. More recently, Mayor O’Connell recently appointed a director of violence prevention and crime reduction to help coordinate these efforts.⁸⁷ Collectively, these actions have significantly enhanced Nashville’s organizational capacity.

The growing literature on effective city-run violence prevention and intervention efforts has identified several factors conducive to success. One is organizational capacity. Another is a coordinated effort. A third is a comprehensive community safety plan that integrates law enforcement, community-based prevention and intervention, and public health strategies.⁸⁸ The most effective plans focus resources on the people and places at highest risk of violence and include appropriate law enforcement interventions, such as a robust group violence intervention.⁸⁹ **The research is clear that enforcement and prevention are complements, not substitutes.**

Broader Context

The police are important, but they are only one part of a broader system. The pandemic-era homicide surge that began in 2020 was a synchronized national phenomenon, largely attributable to the systemic disruptions of COVID-19 — not to the failures of any individual police department. Since approximately 2022, homicides have fallen sharply in cities across the country, with many jurisdictions now reporting rates well below pre-pandemic levels.

Police are one part of a larger public safety system. Crime rates and community safety are also shaped by economic conditions, housing stability, schools, health care, community organizations, and the full range of criminal justice actors — from prosecutors and courts through corrections and reentry services. Policymakers seeking meaningful progress on public safety should think in systems terms, recognizing that the most effective strategies require coordinated work across these domains. Police contribute — meaningfully — to public safety. However, they do not, on their own, determine it.

⁸⁷ Rachel Wegner, “Nashville Mayor launches the city’s first Office of Youth Services,” *the Tennessean*, November 29, 2024. “New task force to begin work on creating Community Safety Plan 29-member task force to hold discussions with the community, compliment investments in public safety,” Mayor’s Office Media Release, January 9, 2026.

<https://www.nashville.gov/departments/mayor/news/new-task-force-begin-work-creating-community-safety-plan>. Banner Staff, “April 6: Stephanie Bradley Appointment,” *Nashville Banner*.

⁸⁸ Jason Tan de Bibiana, Kerry Mulligan, Aaron Stagoff-Belfort, and Daniela Gilbert, “Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety,” Vera Institute of Justice and the National OVP Network, November 2023. The report found that of 48 OVPs surveyed, approximately two-thirds reported to the mayor or city/county manager.

⁸⁹ Anthony Braga, “Gun Violence Is a Public Health Crisis That Needs More Applied Criminologists,” *Criminology and Public Policy* (2021 Vollmer Award Address).

Conclusion

Public safety is not an abstract ideal. It is a precondition for a city where everyone has a chance to flourish, where children get to school safely, where residents, commuters, and visitors can move without fear, where businesses invest with confidence, neighborhoods retain residents, and public spaces welcome everyone. Research consistently finds that cities with lower levels of serious crime show stronger educational outcomes, better physical and mental health, higher labor-force participation, and greater long-term economic stability.

Nashville made real progress in 2025. Its homicide rate has come into line with peer cities, and overall crime rates are broadly at or below pre-pandemic levels. These gains are significant and should not be minimized. At the same time, relative to the cities Nashville competes with for residents, talent, investment, and tourism, its overall rates of serious crime remain elevated. Aggravated assaults involving firearms have risen sharply over the past five years, and motor vehicle theft remains well above pre-pandemic levels.

The comparative data in this paper point to areas where evidence-based action could make a meaningful difference. Nashville can consider the experience of peer cities as it debates technology deployment. It can use a total-compensation analysis to make informed decisions about officer pay and retention. It can commission a workload-based staffing study to determine whether MNPd has the resources it needs to meet the community's expectations. In addition, it can develop a coordinated, evidence-based violence-reduction strategy that integrates policing with community-based prevention — an approach supported by a large body of research and already being pursued, in nascent form, by cities across the country.

Public safety is the bedrock on which a city's aspirations rest. Nashville has the resources, the institutional capacity, and the opportunity to find common ground on difficult questions and chart an evidence-based, community-informed path forward.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the Nashville Police + Public Safety Alliance for commissioning this research and for supporting an independent, data-driven approach to the questions it addresses.

I am also grateful to the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department (MNPd) for providing data for this project, for its assistance in designing the peer-city police department survey, and for answering hundreds of questions about data and methodology, without regard for whether a given metric pointed to progress or a continuing challenge. Metro Human Resources also provided valuable assistance and insights into pay for peer-city police departments. The author is grateful for their patience and professionalism.

The author is grateful to the Austin Police Department, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, the Columbus Division of Police, the Denver Police Department, the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, the Louisville Metro Police Department, the Memphis Police Department, and the Raleigh Police Department for their assistance with this project.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Jacob Kaplan for creating and maintaining the Crime Data Tool and Jeff Asher for creating and maintaining the Real-Time Crime Index.

Any mistakes in this report are the sole responsibility of the author.

About the Author

John Buntin is an expert on crime trends data and community safety. As the program director for the Council on Criminal Justice's Crime Trends Working Group, Buntin assembled a group of national experts from academia, state and local government, and law enforcement to assess national crime data standards and produce recommendations for the U.S. Department of Justice and the White House on how to enhance crime statistics. The Crime Trends Working Group also supported CCJ's efforts to deliver timely information on crime trends.

Before working at CCJ, Buntin served as the policy and community safety director for Metropolitan Nashville Mayor John Cooper. Before joining Metro, Buntin worked as a journalist and author. His pieces have appeared in *the Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *Governing Magazine*. His books include *Governing the States and Localities* (CQ Press) and *LA Noir: The Struggle for Control of America's Most Seductive City* (Random House), as well as numerous case studies on policing for Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Buntin graduated with honors from Princeton University's School of Public and International Affairs.

Appendix A: Peer Cities

This white paper seeks to understand crime trends and public safety investments and outcomes in Nashville by comparing it to peer cities. A number of factors were considered in assembling this list, including geography, city and metro size, demographics, median income, crime levels, and government structure. Table A1 (below) lists and presents a range of information for cities considered for inclusion in this group.

Some cities were obvious candidates for inclusion. Austin, Charlotte, Columbus, Louisville, and Indianapolis fell into this category. Like Nashville, Louisville, and Indianapolis have consolidated city-county governments. Both cities are also Midwest regional competitors.

Austin is a wealthier city than Nashville. Its demographics are also different, and it has close economic ties to larger cities such as Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth. Nevertheless, Austin is invariably included as a point of reference, particularly by Nashville's business community. This study included Denver for similar reasons. (Denver also has a consolidated city-county government.)

Atlanta was excluded because the greater Atlanta metropolitan area is much larger than the greater Nashville metro area. Cities such as New Orleans and St. Louis were also excluded because their populations were much smaller. Raleigh, however, was included. Like Nashville and Columbus, it is a fast-growing state capital. However, it is smaller and wealthier than Nashville.

Memphis is Tennessee's second-largest city and a common comparison point. It was included as a point of interest. Kansas City is an occasional regional competitor with a higher crime baseline. Oklahoma City, which also has a higher crime rate than many of the above peer cities, was also considered for inclusion. Las Vegas was also considered. Las Vegas and Clark County have a consolidated police department; however, the two governments are otherwise not consolidated. This would have made cross-government comparisons challenging. Las Vegas's economy and demographics are also quite different from Nashville's.

This study compares crime in Nashville with that of peer cities. By excluding high-crime cities such as St. Louis and New Orleans from the sample — and including smaller, lower-crime Raleigh — this white paper sets a rigorous but fair set of comparison points for Nashville. The chart below shows the full list of cities considered for inclusion.

Nashville and Peer Cities, an Expanded List

City	Population	Metro Population	Median Household Income	Demographics	Note
Atlanta	520,070	6.4 M	\$85,880	46.9% Black, White 39.9, 6.5% Hispanic, 5.0% Asian,	Southeastern regional mega-city, state capital.
Austin	993,588	2.55 M	\$91,501	White NH 53.5%, Hispanic 32.6%, Black 7.1%, Asian 9.5%	Capital; strong population and job growth; peer in public safety staffing.
Charlotte	943,476	2.88 M	\$80,581	White 40.1%, Black 32.2%, Hispanic 17.3%, Asian 6.6%	Finance hub and fast-growing metro—very similar structural peers in growth and demographics.
Cincinnati	314,915	2.30 M	\$54,314	White 50.3%, Black 35.3%, Hispanic 5.4%, Asian 2.5%	Legacy Midwest city undergoing revitalization.
Columbus	933,263	2.22 M	\$62,350	White 51.1%, Black 29.6%, Hispanic 8.3%, Asian 5.9%	University-driven state capital; growth-oriented with active safety reforms.
Denver	729,019	3.052 M	\$94,157	White 59.5%, Hispanic 27.9%, Black 8.3%, Asian 3.8%	Growing Western capital; useful for policy, housing, and tech comparisons.
Indianapolis	891,484	2.17 M	\$66,629	White 50.8%, Black 27.3%, Hispanic 14.4%, Asian 4.2%	State capital with similar metro size and city governance structure.
Kansas City	516,032	2.25 M	\$65,225	White 54.2%, Black 26.0%, Hispanic 12.5%, Asian 2.9%	Midwestern anchor with high CFS volume, relevant crime profile, and state-local governance tension.
Louisville	640,796	1.39 M	\$61,488	White 60.9%, Black 21.8%, Hispanic 9.4%, Asian 2.9%	Regional river port with logistics/healthcare base; in-state peer with cultural similarities.
Memphis	610,919	1.34 M	\$51,399	Black 63.0%, White 22.4%, Hispanic 9.8% Asian 2.2%	In-state peer with strong logistics sector, cultural assets, and shared regional context for crime/public safety.
Miami	487,014	6.46 M	\$68,635	Hispanic 66.9%, Black 14.1%, White 22.3%, Asian 2.0% City	Densely populated and immigrant-rich; a peer in policing complexity, with distinct clearance and service profile.
Milwaukee	563,531	1.57 M	\$52,992	White 33.8%, Black 36.7%, Hispanic 22.0%, Asian 5.7%	Post-industrial city with significant equity and crime challenges; staffing and workload profile relevant for urban comparison.
Nashville	704,963	2.15 M	\$80,217	White NH 54.5%, Black 24.1%, Hispanic 14.1%, Asian 3.3%	Fast-growing state capital; diversified economy and expanding metro region.
Raleigh	499,825	1.56 M	\$86,309	White 52.9%, Black 26.2%, Hispanic 12.2%, Asian 5.5%	State capital in the Research Triangle; highly educated, tech-focused, and comparable in governance and growth profile.
San Antonio, TX	1,526,656	2.76 M	\$62,322	Hispanic 64.6%, White 22.8%, Black 6.8%, Asian 2.7%	Large Southern city with strong logistics, military, and growth trajectory; comparable CFS volume and public safety structure.
Tampa	414,547	3.42 M	\$72,851	White 47.5%, Hispanic 26.0%, Black 20.3%, Asian 5.3%	Rapid metro growth, moderate crime rates, and strong public safety modernization make Tampa a useful peer for southern benchmarking.

City and Population estimates use the most recent 2024 U.S. Census estimates. Income and demographic information use 2023 Census data.
Created with Datawrapper

Appendix B: Crime Trends

This white paper uses four primary data sources — UCR Part 1 crime data, compiled by Princeton criminologist Jacob Kaplan; data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), data from MNPDP’s ARMS system, and data from AH Datalytics’s Real-Time Crime Index.

UCR Part 1 data. For cross-city crime trend comparisons, this paper relies primarily on Jacob Kaplan’s Crime Data Tool, which compiles final FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR) submissions.⁹⁰ The FBI reviews and standardizes reports from state UCR programs and state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, applying the hierarchy rule which counts the most serious crime. This methodology has been used for decades and is well established. Nevertheless, the FBI cautions against using these numbers to compare crimes across jurisdictions. This, in part, reflects the fact that different states define the most common types of violent crime (aggravated assaults) and property crime (larceny) differently.

Despite warning against the use of FBI UCR data for comparisons, respected crime analysts routinely present this data in ways that encourage comparisons. This report takes several steps to minimize potentially misleading comparisons. First, it presents information on cross-city crime *trends*. Most charts in the report present information on how crime trends are changing over time. Readers should focus on changes in trends over time. They should be more cautious about cross-city comparisons, particularly when it comes to issues such as property crimes, which often go unreported. Second, this analysis focuses on a small set of peer cities. These cities still almost certainly have significant reporting differences. However, presenting cross-city trends for a sample of similar cities most likely reduces those disparities.

Police department data. To calculate changes in crime trends in Nashville over time, this white paper utilizes MNPDP ARM data. Specifically, it uses the “County Calendar Year to Calendar Year Comparison” on page 54 of MNPDP’s January 3, 2026, weekly crime book. These data-rich sources are available online here:

<https://www.nashville.gov/departments/police/executive-services/strategic-development/crime-analysis/reports>.

The MNPDP numbers presented in these crime books are preliminary. These numbers are routinely updated as criminal cases move through the court system. They should thus be viewed as preliminary. For that reason, the white paper presents these numbers as approximations and estimates.

Homicide numbers for Nashville’s peer cities were sourced from police department or public sources or, in a few instances, from press accounts. These numbers — particularly the 2025 numbers — should also be treated as estimates. This paper typically uses the term “homicide” to refer to what are technically murders and non-negligent manslaughters. Most of Nashville’s peer cities report homicide using that definition. However, some cities also track a broader measure of homicides, which include negligent manslaughter or justified homicides. Memphis, for instance, reported 184 murders in 2025 but also 235 homicides. This represents a strikingly high rate of violent confrontations ending in death that are nevertheless deemed to be legally justified. Memphis’s reported homicide (murder and non-negligent manslaughter) numbers may track UCR Part 1 reporting standards; however, in some ways, they understate the levels of violence in Memphis. In short, these numbers too should be treated as estimates.

⁹⁰ Kaplan, Jacob. Jacob Kaplan's Concatenated Files: Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data: Offenses Known and Clearances by Arrest (Return A), 1960-2024. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2025-08-21. <https://doi.org/10.3886/E100707V22>

Finally, crime rates for Nashville were calculated by using the following population estimates.

Nashville-Davidson County Population Estimates

Year	Source	Population	Notes
2014	Intercensal	679	Census 2010-2020 Intercensal (Nov 2024)
2015	Intercensal	692	Census 2010-2020 Intercensal (Nov 2024)
2016	Intercensal	700	Census 2010-2020 Intercensal (Nov 2024)
2017	Intercensal	703	Census 2010-2020 Intercensal (Nov 2024)
2018	Intercensal	709	Census 2010-2020 Intercensal (Nov 2024)
2019	Intercensal	713,004	Census 2010-2020 Intercensal (Nov 2024)
2020	V2024 (FRED)	716,095	FRED TNDAMI5POP, V2024 postcensal
2021	V2024 (FRED)	700,966	FRED TNDAMI5POP, V2024 postcensal
2022	V2024 (FRED)	711,280	FRED TNDAMI5POP, V2024 postcensal
2023	V2024 (FRED)	719,092	FRED TNDAMI5POP, V2024 postcensal
2024	V2024 (FRED)	729,595	FRED TNDAMI5POP, V2024 postcensal
2025	Proxy (=2024)	729,505	V2025 county estimates expected Mar 26, 2026

2024 data was also used for 2025.

Source: US Census, FRED • Created with Datawrapper

Total UCR Part 1 counts come from MNPDP's March 3, 2026, Crime Initiative book and can be found here.

Year	Population	Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Agg. Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Auto Theft	Violent Total	Property Total	Total Part I UCR Crime
2015	691,750	79	608	1,902	4,927	5,121	18,838	1,456	7,516	25,415	32,931
2016	699,940	81	571	2,009	4,907	4,593	18,811	1,745	7,568	25,149	32,717
2017	703,490	111	562	2,068	5,073	4,227	19,275	2,601	7,814	26,103	33,917
2018	709,142	90	572	2,135	5,027	3,637	21,075	3,141	7,824	27,853	35,677
2019	713,004	84	522	1,995	4,997	3,419	22,070	2,803	7,598	28,292	35,890
2021	700,966	100	535	1,654	6,329	3,299	19,547	2,999	8,618	25,845	34,463
2022	711,280	109	524	1,458	6,961	3,562	20,715	3,275	9,052	27,552	36,604
2023	719,092	102	538	1,302	6,972	2,907	23,234	5,669	8,914	31,810	40,724
2024	729,505	102	641	1,168	6,556	2,921	23,789	5,195	8,467	31,905	40,372
2025	729,505	67	615	869	5,734	2,528	21,371	4,194	7,285	28,093	35,378

NIBRS. This report also uses the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to provide insights into the changing nature of crime in Nashville. Unlike the UCR Part 1 data, NIBRS data provides a rich array of information on victims, offenders, and the circumstances of crime. However, NIBRS definitions of crime differ from UCR definitions. Using NIBRS and using UCR Part 1 statistics to calculate crime rates will result in somewhat different results, primarily due to these definitional differences. For purposes of cross-city crime comparisons, criminologists generally prefer to use UCR Part 1 data. This analysis follows that example.

The Real-Time Crime Index. Finally, the white paper occasionally uses 2025 crime data from AH Datalytics's RTCI, which collects monthly crime statistics from more than 400 law enforcement agencies through state Uniform Crime Reporting programs, public records management systems, and agency-level aggregation. The RTCI is designed to capture crime trends — the direction and magnitude of change — with minimal lag. However, because RTCI data are preliminary and collected through channels different from the FBI's final published figures, RTCI counts may differ from the official data that agencies eventually submit to the FBI.

In some instances, 2025 RTCI differs significantly from police department data. As a result, this white paper uses RTCI 2025 data cautiously, primarily for broad estimates of 2025 property crime rates and violent crime rates.

Appendix C: Spending

This study follows the methodology of the Vera Institute’s 2020 report, [“What Policing Costs,”](#) which calculated the percentage of general funds that went to police departments in 72 U.S. cities.⁹¹

This analysis seeks to present comparable general fund operating budgets. The goal is to measure the amount available for operating departments, not for debt repayment. It uses adopted FY2024-2025 data because some of the peer cities had not published approved FY26 budgets at the time this report was written.

The general fund is the primary tax-supported appropriation for police operations. The General Fund excludes police department revenues, grants, and capital project funds. As a result, actual total policing funding is higher than the amount shown in this analysis. For cities such as Charlotte and most departments, the general fund accounts for more than 95% of police department funds. In contrast, the Denver PD receives more than 15% of its total revenues from sources other than the general fund.

Jurisdictions sometimes increase funding with mid-year appropriations, carry forwards, and reserve allocations. The frequency of such fiscal maneuvers varies widely across cities. Comparing jurisdictions using adopted budgets maintains consistency in scope and timing. That said, many of the cities included in this analysis operate on different fiscal years.

To calculate per capita spending, this study used calendar-year 2024 population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau ([2024 population estimates](#) for cities). The one exception is Charlotte. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) serves the City of Charlotte and parts of Mecklenburg County. As a result, this study uses an estimate of the population served to calculate per capita police spending.

Specific citations can be found in the following sources:

- **Austin.** City of Austin Approved 2024-2025 Budget. August 2024.
https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/BOE/Budget/FY2025-2026_Approved_Budget.pdf. Accessed October 21, 2025. Note: This covers the time period from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025.
 - See p. 30 for the general fund. See pp. 393 for police budget information. Note that on p. 29, Austin says the percentage of the general fund that goes to policing is 34.8%.
 - Austin later amended its 2024-2025 budget, increasing the Police Department’s general fund budget to 513,185,014 and raising the police portion of the general fund to 36%.
- **Charlotte.** General fund figures come from FY 2025 Adopted Budget: Advancing Opportunity for All, City of Charlotte.
 - Page 4 says the total police budget for FY25 was \$364.5 million, 40.6% of the general fund.
 - Page 147 says the police department’s general fund budget was \$319,664,835, which the department supplemented with \$44,826,699 in revenues.

⁹¹ “What Policing Costs,” The Vera Institute, 2020.

<https://www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities>. Accessed December 10, 2025.

- **Columbus.** City of Columbus 2025 Adopted Budget, City of Columbus.
<https://www.columbus.gov/files/sharedassets/city/v/1/finance/document-library/adopted-budgets/fy25-2025-adopted-budget.pdf>. Accessed October 23, 2025.
 - The first page of the above document provides a figure for the approved fy2025 general fund. The first table, titled, “AMENDED 2025 PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS - ALL FUNDS SUMMARY BY OBJECT OF EXPENSE,” provides a figure for the police budget.
- **Denver.** Mayor’s 2025 Budget, City and County of Denver, Adopted, For the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2025.
 - See p. 72, “Budget Summary - Exhibit 2,” for Denver’s general fund total appropriation.
 - See p. 732, “Department Budget,” for the FY2025 police department budget from the general fund.
 - Note: the Denver Police Department (DPD) receives the lowest share of funding from the city’s general fund of any peer-city police department. However, DPD also received a very large transfer from so-called “Special Revenue funds” —\$55,535,690 in total. A little over half of this comes from a special property tax. The remainder comes from the Denver Airport Authority for the DPD’s Airport Police Bureau. This “Special Revenue Funding” brings DPD’s total FY25 budget to \$334,625,021, a significantly higher figure.
 - The Denver Police Department reduced its approved budget by \$8,438,600 mid-fiscal year, in response to strains caused by immigrant arrivals in the city.
- **Indianapolis.** Unlike the other cities in this study, the Indianapolis Metro Police Department is funded in large part by a dedicated Police Service District Fund, which is funded by dedicated property taxes and a dedicated income tax and is separate from the city’s General Fund.
 - See p. 89-90 of the City of Indianapolis Adopted 2025 Budget for the Consolidated City of Indianapolis-Marion County for a discussion of IMPD’s budget, including (on p. 90) the IMPD general budget of \$288,762,208 for 2025 and the total budget of \$337,836,405.
- **Kansas City, MO.** This analysis relies on two sources: Kansas City, Missouri Police Department, Adopted Budget, 2024-2025 and the Kansas City Adopted FY2024-25 Transmittal Letter, May 24, 2024.
 - See p. i — KCPD, AB — for the total department appropriated budget — \$318,775,980. See p. v for the general fund appropriation (\$294,340,607). Page 1 confirms both amounts.
 - See p. 8 — KC Transmittal letter — for further details on the overall budget. Kansas City has a total government activities budget of \$1.5 billion and a general operating budget of \$833 million. This analysis uses the general operating budget, which covers core discretionary spending and excludes capital and debt spending.

- **Louisville.** This analysis draws on two sources, the 2024-2025 Approved Detailed Budget, Mayor Craig Greenberg, Louisville Metro Government and the 2024-2025 Approved Executive Budget, Mayor Craig Greenberg, Louisville Metro Government.
 - See p. v, “Metro Government Operations, General Fund Detail” in the Approved Detailed Budget for the Council-approved general fund appropriation of \$833,954,800. An opioid settlement added an additional \$5 million to the budget. That and other funding brought the total general operating fund for fy2025 to \$841,261,300. See p. 55 of the 2024-2025 Approved Executive Budget for the total general operating fund figure of \$841,261,300.
 - See p. 35 in The 2024-2025 Approved Detailed Budget for the \$229,998,900 police general fund budget allocation and for the total budget figure of \$240,417,500 (which includes grants, revenues, and non-general fund sources.)
- **Memphis.** City of Memphis: FY25 Adopted Budget Book.
 - See p. 20 — “FY2025 Proposed to Adopted Budget” for the general fund division for police services. It shows an adopted budget of \$300,636,933. See also p. 340.
 - See p. 87 — Budgeted and historical 2025 Expenditures by Fund. It shows the FY2025 adopted general fund as \$852,422,600.
- **Nashville.** FY2024-2025 Operating Budget Book, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee. July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025
 - See p. 76 — “Expenditures Overview: Financial Schedules,” for the Police Department budgetary fund sources. This shows a total police budget (all funds) of \$330,561,700. Unlike most other cities, Nashville has an urban services district and a general services district. Page 76 shows appropriate revenues for both districts. MNPd receives \$308,415,100 from budgetary GSD funds, and \$481,000 comes from the budgetary USD fund. This analysis combines both sources to arrive at a total of \$308,896,100 for Nashville’s approved FY25 police funding general appropriation.
 - P. 78 shows a slightly different FY2025 budget for the police — \$308,415,100.
 - P. 79 shows a FY2025 GSD operating budget of \$1,447,805,200 and (on p. 80) a USD operating budget of \$205,476,000. This analysis combines these two funds to produce a FY2025 approved general operating fund of \$1,653,281,200. This does not include GSD and USD expenditures on debt (\$258,290,600 for the GSD, \$19,415,700 for the USD).
- **Raleigh.** Investing in Raleigh’s Future: FY2025 Adopted Budget.
 - P. 57 — “Revenue Summary” shows a General Revenue Fund of \$732,654,898. To avoid double-counting, this analysis uses the net revenue figure of \$708,388,800 for Raleigh’s FY25 approved general fund operating budget. However, \$113,149,613 goes to debt service, and another \$10,966,555 goes to a revolving fund. Another \$3,453,573 goes to housing, which is often handled separately in other cities. This analysis removes those items, leaving a general fund of \$605,085,157.

- **Austin.** See “Join Us, Austin Police Pay and Recruiting,” <https://www.austintexas.gov/apdrecruiting/pay-benefits>. It shows a P01-equivalent salary of \$78,627 and a top salary after 23 years of service of \$143,578/year. A Metro survey showed a starting salary at graduation of \$78,627/year and a top salary of \$118,132.00. For the full FY 25 pay scale, see the following:
<https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/HR/Compensation/Police%20Scales%20FY25.pdf>.
- **Charlotte.** See CMPD salary and benefits.
<https://charlottepolicejobs.org/careers/salary-benefits/>. Entry-level pay starts at \$59,502; officers earn up to \$113,626. Pay incentive for associates’ (+5%, \$62,477) and bachelor’s (+10%, \$65,452) degrees.
- **Columbus.** For more details on Columbus, see the following:
<https://www.columbus.gov/Government/Jobs/Police-Officer-Recruitment/Becoming-a-Police-Officer/Salary>
- **Denver.** See more on Denver Police Department benefits here:
<https://denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Agencies-Departments-Offices-Directories/Police-Department/Jobs/Denver-Police-Recruitment/Salary-Benefits>.
- **Indianapolis.** See “IMPD Salary and Benefits” for more details.
<https://www.indy.gov/activity/impd-salary-and-benefits>. Pay raises are based on years of service.
- **Kansas City.** For more details on KCPD pay, see the following:
<https://kcpolice.org/careers/salary-benefits/>
- **Louisville.** For more details on LMPD pay, see the following:
<https://www.lmpd.gov/259/Salary-Benefits>.
- **Memphis.** For more details on MPD pay, see the following:
<https://joinmpd.com/benefits-salary/>. For the full step schedule, see
https://totalrewards.memphistn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/CityOfMemphis-HumanResources_PayPlan_2026.pdf.
- **Nashville.** For more details on MNPB, see “Join MNPB: Salaries and Benefits,”
<https://joinmnpb.com/salary-benefits/>.
- **Raleigh.** For more details on Raleigh’s police pay plan, see the following:
<https://raleighnc.gov/police/services/rpd-benefits-and-salary>.